NINTENDO POWER

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THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA™
Symphony OF THE Goddesses

"...a black tie, green tunic affair."
- Wired.com

"...a show that would appeal to every possible type of Zelda fan."
- Complex Magazine

"The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses is pure magic."
- Destructoid

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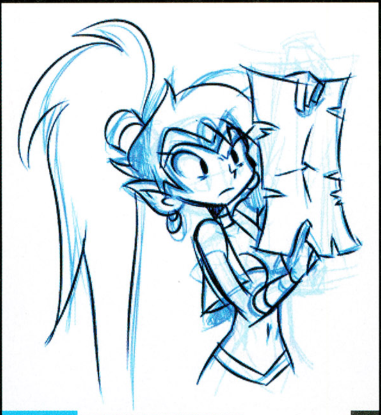

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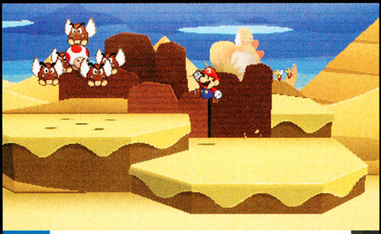

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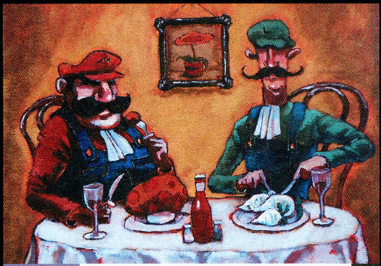

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GBA = GAME BOY ADVANCE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U
WW = WiiWARE

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Pulse

Ready for Wii U

Steve Thomason

In case you hadn't heard, Nintendo's got a new console coming out this month. We've assembled everything you need to get ready in our Ultimate Wii U Launch Guide, and I have to say, this is the most excited I've been about the release of a Nintendo system in quite some time. I do think the price is a bit high, but the company is smart to offer two different hardware configurations. (I'll be picking up the Deluxe Set.) More importantly, the launch-day software lineup may be the greatest of all time. The previous holder of that crown is Sega's Dreamcast, in my opinion, but even its legendary selection couldn't match the sheer breadth of games available for Wii U on day one. From New Super Mario Bros. U and Scribblenauts Unlimited to ZombiU and (the best version of) Tekken Tag Tournament 2, there really is something for everyone. And there's even more great stuff on the immediate horizon, including Rayman Legends, Pikmin 3, and Aliens: Colonial Marines.

I'm also highly encouraged by the partnership with PlatinumGames. That studio is one of the most creative and talented in the industry, and Wii U owners will be getting at least two great-looking exclusives out of the deal—The Wonderful 101 and Bayonetta 2. Nintendo needs to continue looking for opportunities like this, not only to ensure that software keeps flowing in general, but also to address gaps that traditionally have gone unfilled by first-party efforts. This is definitely a good first step.

STEVE THOMASON **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

SURVIVAL-HORROR REBORN!
8 PAGES OF TERRIFYING NEW DETAILS ON ZOMBIU
MARIO POSTER INSIDE!
NINTENDO POWER
Rayman Legends
He's back in his most stunning platformer yet! And it's only on Wii U!

V283 OCTOBER 2012

It's said that all good things must come to an end. But until that happens, I, The Hoff, will be here responding to your comments and questions. Send your letters—including your fondest Nintendo Power memories—to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

Brotherly Love

I love the Super Mario games, but there is one thing that always bothers me. Why do games like New Super Mario Bros., New Super Mario Bros. 2, and New Super Mario Bros Wii get praise, but awesome games like Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story and Super Mario Sunshine fly under the radar when they are awesome?

—PILOTNOVA

We can't speak for other publications, but we adored Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story—it scored a 9.5! And while the New Super Mario Bros. games are great, Super Mario Sunshine outranked them all in our Ultimate Super Mario feature in Vol. 278.

Better with Age?

I've noticed one thing about video game characters—they never age. Take Kirby for example. He's supposed to be young and he just turned 20? What gives?

— NINTENDOTRON7000

It's true—just like comic-book heroes and other fictitious characters, video game heroes tend not to age. After all, how much fun would it be to play as a geriatric Mario who squashes Goombas with his walker, powers up by nabbing false teeth, and fights Bowser with his cane? Actually, that sounds kinda rad. We'll ask Miyamoto to get on that ASAP.

Feeling Blue

I've been wondering ever since I read your "Blue Times Two" article in Vol. 282, where is the infamous Blue Bomber these days? I know Mega Man is a busy robot and all (probably out saving the world from an evil doctor), but why hasn't he had any new games recently? I would love to see a Mega Man N3DS title, whether it be a classic side-scroller or another Battle Network game. However, my ultimate fantasy is to see Mega Man in the upcoming Super Smash Bros. for Wii U and N3DS. **—NICK B.**

Mega Man has indeed hit a slow patch as of late, but we have hope that he'll be back. For more on the Blue Bomber's past and future, turn to page 32.

That's Just Gross

You know, I was looking back and realized how long I've been a hardcore gamer. I started playing video games back when I was 6 and still in diapers. I've looked back at how bad the graphics for each video game system used to be compared to now and I'm like, "Wow." You can tell how much gaming has evolved. And to this day, I am still a hardcore gamer. I believe I'd still wear a diaper just so I wouldn't have to set down the controller. Now tell me if anyone else is a *truly* committed gamer like I am!

—MAX THE OMEGA WOLF

Too much information there, Max. Good thing controllers are wireless these days!

I was ecstatic when I saw that you guys featured Diddy Kong, my personal favorite out of all the Kongs, in Star Power. I burst out laughing when I saw the "Put bananas here" with an arrow pointing at his mouth! My brother and I used to listen to the DK Rap over and over when we played Donkey Kong 64....

—SIR DOMINO

STAR POWER

Diddy Kong

Donkey Kong's little buddy is more than just second banana.

CAREER GRAPH

OUR FAVORITE DIDDY KONG GAMES

"OK, that's just weird. But also delicious!"

THAT FUNKY MONKEY

He's back again and about time too.
And this time he's in the mood.
He can fly real high with his jetpack on.
With his pistols out, he's one tough Kong!
He'll make you smile when he plays his tune.
But Kremlings beware, 'cause he's after you!

Legend of the Silver Screen

I am a longtime fan of the Legend of Zelda video game series. I remember staying up with my siblings and playing The Legend of Zelda and Zelda II: The Adventure of Link on the NES. I remember getting A Link to the Past on Super NES for my birthday! I even remember the cartoon series, which I still love to this day! So why not a movie? The Zelda series would come to life even more as a wonderfully beautiful CGI movie in the style of *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children*. Then I would have yet another awesome Zelda thing to brag about! **—JOIE B.**

Good video game–based movies have been few and far between, but we'd love to see The Legend of Zelda give it a try. Our only question: would Link have any lines?

Fight Like a Ninja

After reading the Tekken Tag Tournament 2 preview in Vol. 283, I was like, "Sweet! Ninja Mario!" And then I started thinking...why doesn't Mario have a Ninja Suit power-up in the New Super Mario Bros. series? He has pretty much everything else, and the sweet satisfaction of Mario throwing shurikens at Goombas and crawling in the shadows along the walls/pipes would be freakin' awesome! And let's face it—even Princess Peach would fall for the mysterious man in the dark suit. **—RANA125**

Mmmm, Crunchy!

When Mario finds a power-up does he eat it? I know he likes lasagna, but who would eat a boomerang?

— KLAMPON

The mushrooms? Maybe. The rest? Probably not.

Covering All Bases

I have been an avid reader of your magazine throughout many years of my life. A lot of those years I have meant to write a letter to this magazine, but unfortunately have always been too lazy to do it. So...here: Mr. T, Chuck Norris, Chris Slate, Big the Cat, Liquid Hoff. **—MASTER260**

That pretty much says it all. You forgot only "mutant squirrel."

Big Hairy Deal

In your August issue, I noticed that you said Zero [from Mega Man X] had a ponytail! Where did you get that? It's a scarf! Zero is supposed to be cool. Why would a cool Reploid have a ponytail?

— STING CHAMELEON

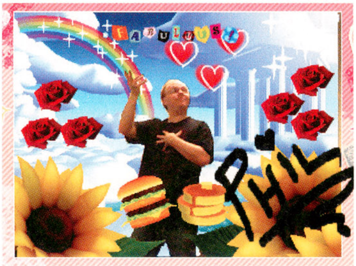
Capcom senior community manager Brett Elston tells us it's "most definitely a ponytail." So there!

Sign Here, Please

I read somewhere online that if I requested it, you guys could help to hook me up with a few autographed photos of Zelda. Any chance this rumor is true?

— VR

The bad news is that we can't provide any autographed photos of Hyrule's popular princess. The good news is that we *can* give you the next-best thing: an autographed picture of Phil T. Simply cut out the picture at right, get it enlarged at your local copy shop, and store it under your pillow for safe keeping.



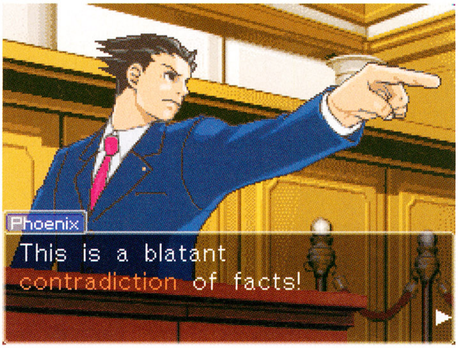
DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hey, Hoff, since you are the second most awesome person I know, I got a question to ask, bro. If you had a chance to go out with Princess Zelda, Peach, Samus, a lady version of you, or any other girl in the Nintendo gaming world, who would it be and why?

—JOHN THE HUMAN

See, this is the problem—haven't the women of the Nintendo universe proven that they're more than just damsels to be swooned over and rescued? Haven't they been able to hold their own against the men in Super Smash Bros. Brawl? Isn't Princess Peach the most useful hero in Super Mario Bros. 2? Hasn't Samus saved the galaxy time and time again? And how do you know about Lady Hoff, anyway? That's supposed to be classified! As such, I refuse to pick a character from a Nintendo-published game. Instead, I pick Amy from Sonic the Hedgehog, mostly because I'm afraid she'd knock all my teeth out with her hammer if I picked anyone else.

It would be awesome if Phoenix Wright from Ace Attorney was my teacher! That would be one subject I would look forward to. Especially yelling "Objection!" at someone who tries to prove me wrong.
—CHOMPS JR.



Phoenix

This is a blatant contradiction of facts!

What game character would you want to have as a teacher?

If I could have anyone as a teacher, it would be Luigi. I play basketball for my school, and I want to know how he can jump so high! **—JAY B.**

I think it'd be cool to take a few lessons in robotics from the evil genius Dr. Wily! Constructing my own (and reprogramming other people's) powerful, sentient combat robots is undoubtedly a valuable skill that would take me far in life. True, the doctor doesn't seem to like fellow humans all that much...plus meeting him in person would be kinda difficult, since he spends most of his time in labyrinthine, spike-laden fortresses that are crawling with robotic minions. But it'd be worth it. Probably. **—KODESMI**

I would love to have Link as a teacher. He just has so much he can teach: how to live in a tree house at one with nature, horseback riding, artfully playing an ocarina, masterfully wielding a sword and shield, being brave in the face of danger, safe bomb-packing and -disposal techniques, how to use a bow and arrow, how to catch bugs, boomerang lessons...the list goes on and on!
—ASHLI T.

I would choose Solid Snake. He would teach the class awesome stealth moves, and how to kick bullies' butts to pieces.
—SAL THE EVIL GREEVIL

I would prefer to have Princess Peach as my teacher. I mean, how good can you get? She is super nice (she never once held a grudge against Bowser even after 27 years of kidnapping), and she can bake delicious cakes. She would probably give out cake to anyone who answered a question correctly. Princess Peach? No, Princess Teach! **—ROCKROC**

I'd really love to have Professor Layton as a teacher; he's a brilliant and likable fellow who could teach me lots about archeology *and* puzzle-solving.
—THEBRUDDAMASTER

I'd like Tails the Fox as my teacher. I'd learn how to create robots to clean my room and do my homework. Or a robotic fire-breathing dragon. **—ELORA D.**

My pick would obviously have to be Mario. He has the experience. So I would probably say that I would take a typing class from him.
—SQUIDGE

I would love to have Princess Zelda as a teacher! She has the Triforce of Wisdom, for one thing, which would make for a great learning experience. And if you wanted to disguise yourself, you could gain that knowledge too.
—TOADSTER118

I teach 8th-grade science in Sedalia, Missouri, and I would like to co-teach a class with Professor Oak. We could compare and contrast the biological differences and similarities between Pokémon and the animals in our world. Our students would learn the domain-kingdom-phylum-class-order-family-genus-species taxonomy system that we use here, as well as the Pokédex system used in Kanto, Johto, Hoenn, Sinnoh, and Unova. Maybe as an end-of-the-year project Professor Oak could help us develop a real-life Pokédex for cataloging all of the species in our world, which is estimated to be around 9 million (slightly higher than the 649 known species of Pokémon). **—HAKU**

PLEASE WRITE US

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

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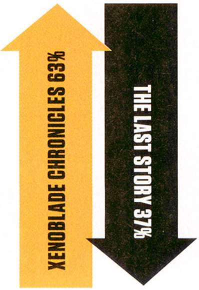
What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

WHICH RECENTLY RELEASED, HIGHLY DEMANDED Wii RPG DO YOU LIKE BETTER?

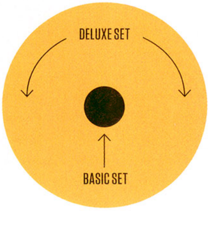


WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET Wii U?

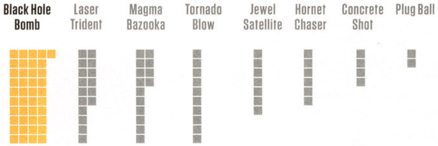
57%
AFTER LAUNCH DAY!

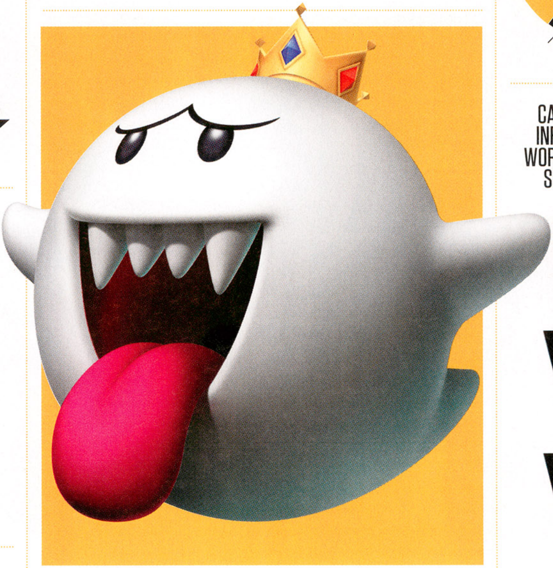
43%
ON LAUNCH DAY!

WHICH Wii U SYSTEM ARE YOU PLANNING TO GET?



WHAT IS THE COOLEST WEAPON IN MEGA MAN 9?



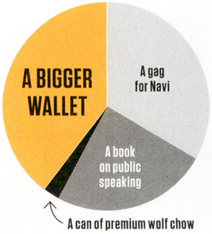


WHICH IS THE BEST VIDEO GAME GHOST?

KING BOO

King Boo (Mario series) 35%
Inky, Blinky, Pinky, and Clyde (Pac-Man) 26%
The Poe Sisters (The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time) 18%
Sissel (Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective) 16%
Wrinkly Kong (Donkey Kong 64) 5%

WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST BIRTHDAY PRESENT FOR LINK?



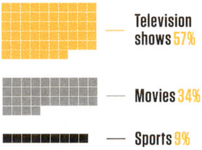
CAN YOU PERFORM THE INFINITE-LIVES TRICK IN WORLD 3-1 IN THE ORIGINAL SUPER MARIO BROS.?

NO 54%

YES 33%
BUT I HAVE TO TRY OVER AND OVER.

YES 13%
I CAN ALMOST DO IT BLINDFOLDED!

WHAT WILL YOU WATCH MORE OF THROUGH NINTENDO TVii?



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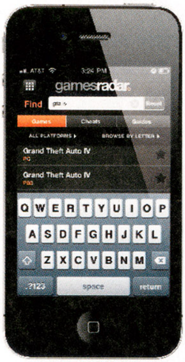
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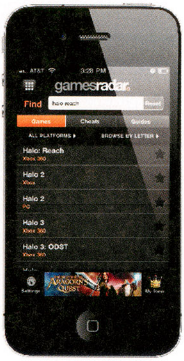
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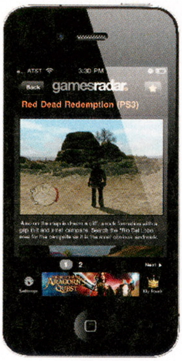
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by June Martin

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POWER UP

Dismember the Titans

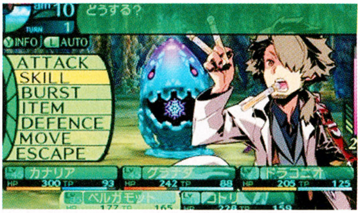
The beloved Nintendo DS dungeon-crawling series is coming to N3DS as Etrian Odyssey IV: Legends of the Titan.

INSPIRED BY CLASSIC PC role-playing series like Wizardry and packed with hardcore mechanics such as touch-screen map-drawing, the original Etrian Odyssey was a solid cult hit for the Nintendo DS. A pair of well-received sequels kept fans busy but didn't do much to vary the saga's established formula.

Fortunately, new platforms have a way of shaking up old franchises, and the series's debut on the Nintendo 3DS handheld is offering more fresh features than all of the previous sequels combined. Etrian Odyssey IV: Legends of the Titan boasts 3D-modeled and -animated enemies (replacing the still pictures from past games), a full world map with multiple destinations (instead of the single dungeon offered previously), and enhanced connectivity components that allow players to trade their custom characters with the N3DS system's StreetPass functionality. In an interesting twist, the world map is traversable only with a hot-air balloon-esque airship, and players will have to upgrade the vessel and strategically ride the gusting winds to avoid deadly foes and reach new destinations.

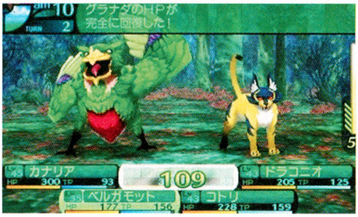
The default difficulty setting remains geared toward hardcore players, but the developers at Atlus have taken steps to make the game more accessible by offering a casual difficulty mode (which players can select at any time, not just at the start of the game) and reverting the series's often-esoteric character classes into more conventional RPG archetypes.

Etrian Odyssey IV: Legends of the Titan is scheduled to ship in early 2013. **—CASEY L.**



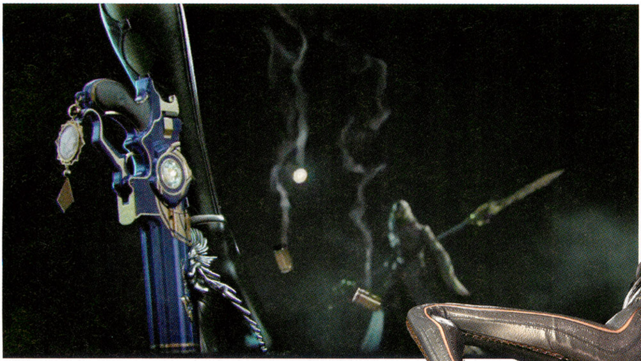
どうする？

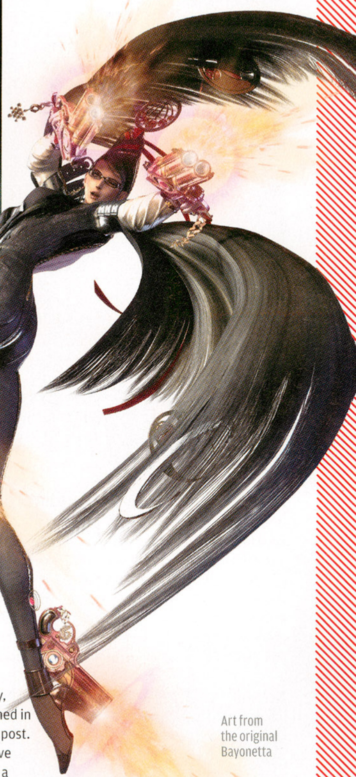
10
TURN 1
INFO
AUTO
ATTACK
SKILL
BURST
ITEM
DEFENCE
MOVE
ESCAPE
カナリア HP 300 TP 93
グラナダ HP 242 TP 88
ドラコニオ HP 205 TP 125
ベルガモット HP 177 TP 165
コトリ HP 228 TP 159



グラナダのHPが
完全に回復した！

10
TURN 2
カナリア HP 300 TP 93
109
ドラコニオ HP 205 TP 125
ベルガモット HP 177 TP 156
コトリ HP 228 TP 159





Art from the original Bayonetta

A Boot from the Blue

Bayonetta 2 for Wii U is the latest bombshell to come from the new partnership between Nintendo and PlatinumGames.

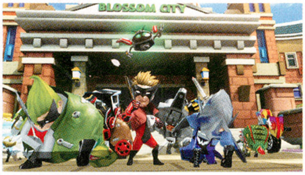
THE DEBUT OF The Wonderful 101—formerly known as Project P-100—was one of the biggest surprises of this year's E3. The game was revealed to be a Wii U exclusive by respected developer PlatinumGames, directed by the famed Hideki Kamiya (creator of Okami, Viewtiful Joe, and Devil May Cry), and seemed to be well on schedule for an early-2013 launch. The only dark lining on that beautiful silver cloud was the assumption made by fans of Kamiya's previous game, Bayonetta, that his involvement with The Wonderful 101 meant that there would be no sequel for the critically beloved character-action game.

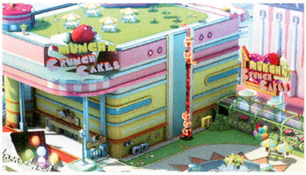
That made the Bayonetta 2 announcement during a mid-September press conference all the more shocking—and all the sweeter. Not only is Bayonetta 2 in development, but it's a Wii U exclusive to be published by Nintendo itself. The game is being helmed by Bayonetta producer Yusuke Hashimoto, but Kamiya remains deeply involved. "I am still supervising the world, story, characters, etc.," he explained in a platinumgames.com blog post.

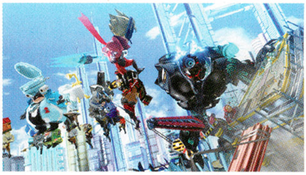
No details of the title have been revealed; there's just a brief teaser showing Bayonetta's iconic gun-heeled boot and a hazy glimpse of a new character wielding a long twin-bladed spear. Games in popular franchises are often announced years in advance, when development has barely begun, but that doesn't seem to be the case here—Kamiya noted that fans have been asking for a sequel since Bayonetta's 2010 release, and that PlatinumGames was "secretly making [it] the entire time." **—CASEY L.**

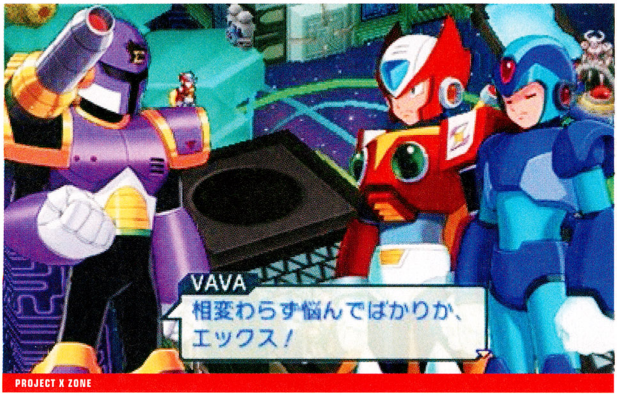
NEW SHOTS FROM THE WONDERFUL 101!

In addition to announcing Bayonetta 2, Nintendo also released new shots from The Wonderful 101. As you can see, the game is looking as weird and awesome as ever!

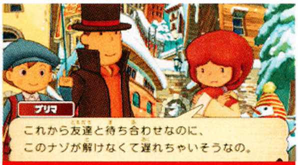




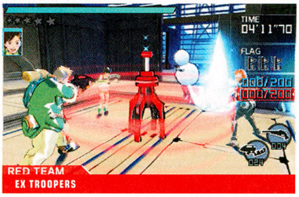




PROJECT X ZONE


プリマ
これから友達と待ち合わせなのに、
このナゾが解けなくて遅れちゃいそうなの。

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE LEGACY OF SUPER-CIVILIZATION A



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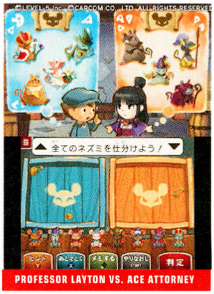
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全てのネズミを仕分けよう！
判定

PROFESSOR LAYTON VS. ACE ATTORNEY

Straight from Tokyo

NEWS *from* JAPAN

Nintendo 3DS rules Tokyo Game Show 2012.

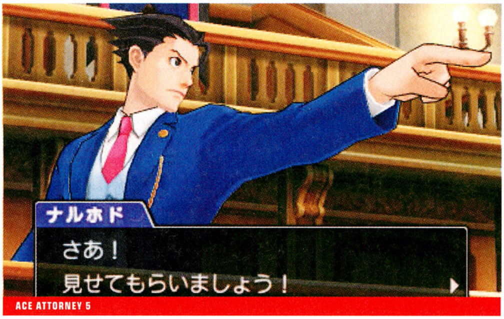
THE INTERNATIONAL IMPACT of Tokyo Game Show has been shrinking the last few years, but this year's event, which was held September 20–24 at Makuhari Messe, featured a number of impressive games for the Nintendo 3DS handheld (most of which have yet to be announced for the US).

Capcom's booth was the most popular at the show, mostly due to the premiere of Monster Hunter 4 for N3DS. Stateside fans, though, were likely even more jazzed about the big return of Phoenix Wright in Ace Attorney 5. Planned for eventual release in North America, AA5 has a familiar mix of logic puzzles and funny characters, only the game has traded sprites for fully 3D models—and it looks great. Capcom also exhibited EX Troopers, the anime-inspired spinoff of Lost Planet. The team-based combat is light and fun, as are the visuals.

Namco Bandai's booth was another huge draw largely due to Project X Zone. The strategy game is a massive crossover that puts Super Smash Bros. to shame, bringing together dozens of characters from the rich histories of Sega, Capcom, and Namco. The tactical gameplay was faster-paced than we expected, with combos and assists that felt suitable for a fighting game.

Level-5 also made a splash, with a lot of help from Professor Layton. TGS offered the first in-person look at Professor Layton and the Legacy of Super-Civilization A (the follow-up to Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask), plus the publisher had Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney on hand. Both games are built on the classic Layton fascination with puzzles, and we loved seeing the two worlds collide. As for new properties, Level-5 put forth the intriguing Fantasy Life, which played like Animal Crossing by way of The Legend of Zelda.

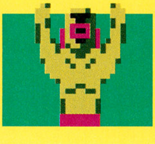
Hopefully there will be more news on these enticing games in the months to come. **—HENRY G.**

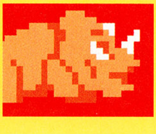


ACE ATTORNEY 5

A WINNER IS...

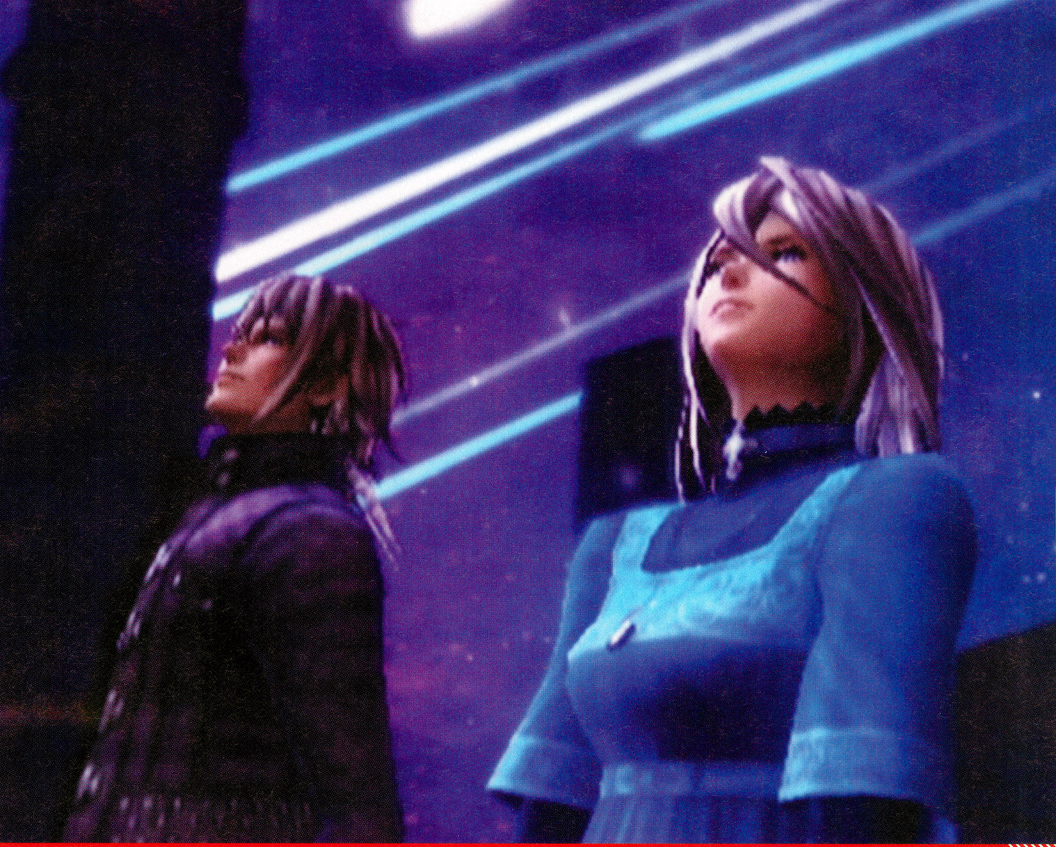
Pumpkin donuts and soft-serve ice cream.





DODONGO DISLIKES...

Corrupted save files.



THAT WAS AWESOME!

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

STARGAZERS' TOWER

THE LAST STORY
Wii, 2012

"The shooting-star scene at Stargazers' Tower is a subtly emotional, magical moment. You can truly feel the romance blossoming between Zael and Calista." —**CHRIS H.**

STAR POWER

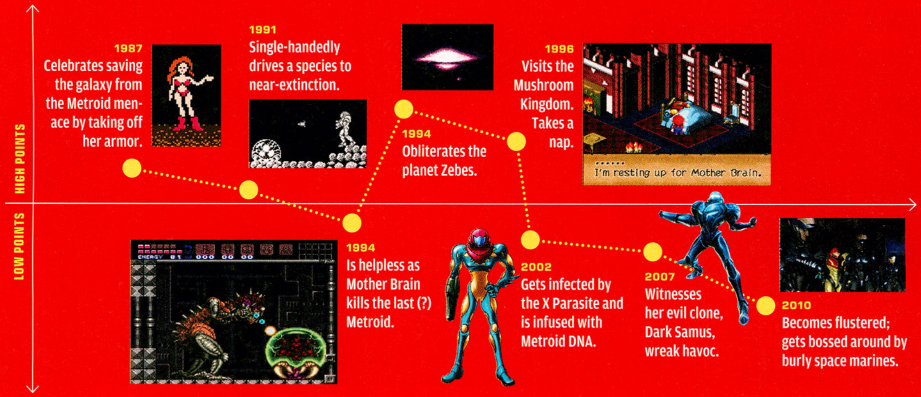
A closer look at the characters we love

Samus Aran

FIRST APPEARANCE:
METROID
NES, 1987

There's no question about it: this world-destroying bounty hunter is the first lady of video games.

CAREER GRAPH



1987 Celebrates saving the galaxy from the Metroid menace by taking off her armor.

1991 Single-handedly drives a species to near-extinction.

1994 Is helpless as Mother Brain kills the last (?) Metroid.

1994 Obliterates the planet Zebes.

1996 Visits the Mushroom Kingdom. Takes a nap.

2002 Gets infected by the X Parasite and is infused with Metroid DNA.

2007 Witnesses her evil clone, Dark Samus, wreak havoc.

2010 Becomes flustered; gets bossed around by burly space marines.

OUR FAVORITE SAMUS ARAN GAMES

Super Metroid

SUPER NES, 1994

The original Metroid was great, but Super Metroid surpassed it in every way and set a new standard for nonlinear action-adventure games. Cool power-ups, atmospheric environments, emotional moments—Super Metroid had it all. It's arguably one of the best games ever made.

Metroid Prime

GAMECUBE, 2002

Samus returned after a long hiatus, and this time players got to go inside the suit in a first-person shooter. The developers at Retro Studios made the transition to 3D look effortless, retaining everything that players loved about Metroid while giving the series a new direction.

Metroid: Zero Mission

GAME BOY ADVANCE, 2004

A remake of Metroid for the NES, Zero Mission improved upon the original with better graphics and sound, improved controls, and a much-appreciated in-game map. This title also expanded the story with additional content that introduced Samus's popular Zero Suit.

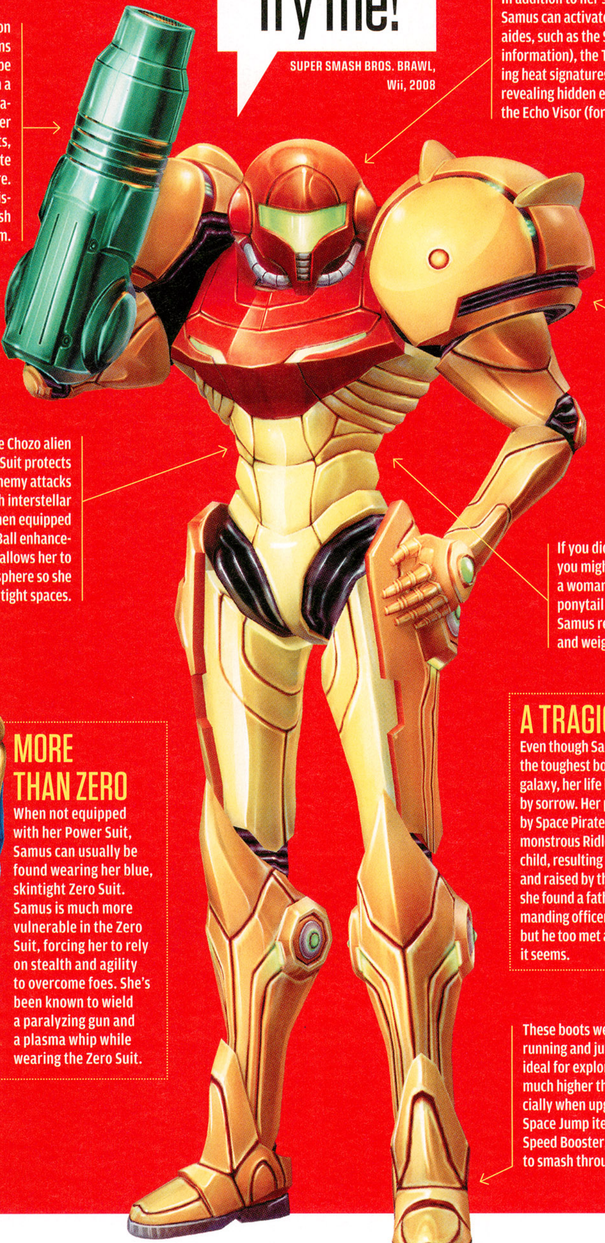
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

Wii, 2007

In this adventure, Samus faced off against her twisted doppelgänger, Dark Samus, as she fought to stop the spread of a radioactive substance known as Phazon. As the first Metroid title for Wii, Corruption sported gorgeous graphics and a new control scheme that greatly benefitted from the Wii Remote.

"Try me!"

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL, Wii, 2008



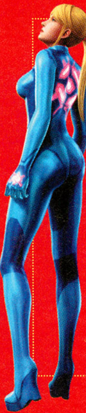
Samus's arm cannon is her primary means of attack. It can be powered up with a variety of augmentations, allowing her to charge her blasts, freeze foes, penetrate walls, and much more. She can also fire missiles and even unleash a grappling beam.

In addition to her standard Combat Visor, Samus can activate various helpful vision aides, such as the Scan Visor (for gathering information), the Thermal Visor (for detecting heat signatures), the X-Ray Visor (for revealing hidden enemies and objects), and the Echo Visor (for locating things via sound).

These bulky pauldrons (shoulder armor) are typically associated with the defense-boosting Varia Suit upgrade. They also help Samus cut a distinctive silhouette.

Created by the Chozo alien race, the Power Suit protects Samus from enemy attacks as well as harsh interstellar environments. When equipped with the Morph Ball enhancement, the suit allows her to curl up into a sphere so she can fit into tight spaces.

If you didn't know any better, you might not realize there's a woman sporting a blonde ponytail inside the suit. Samus reportedly stands 6'3" and weighs 198 pounds.



MORE THAN ZERO

When not equipped with her Power Suit, Samus can usually be found wearing her blue, skintight Zero Suit. Samus is much more vulnerable in the Zero Suit, forcing her to rely on stealth and agility to overcome foes. She's been known to wield a paralyzing gun and a plasma whip while wearing the Zero Suit.

A TRAGIC PAST

Even though Samus is known as the toughest bounty hunter in the galaxy, her life has been shaped by sorrow. Her parents were killed by Space Pirates—specifically the monstrous Ridley—when she was a child, resulting in her being adopted and raised by the Chozo. Years later she found a father figure in her commanding officer Adam Malkovich, but he too met an untimely demise, it seems.

These boots were made for walking—and running and jumping. Samus's footwear is ideal for exploring, plus it allows her to leap much higher than a normal human, especially when upgraded with the Hi-Jump and Space Jump items. When equipped with the Speed Booster, Samus can run fast enough to smash through walls.

POWER QUIZ

EASY

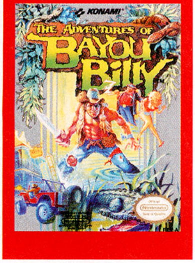
What is the Konami code?

AVERAGE

An issue of Nintendo Power can be found in which Konami game?

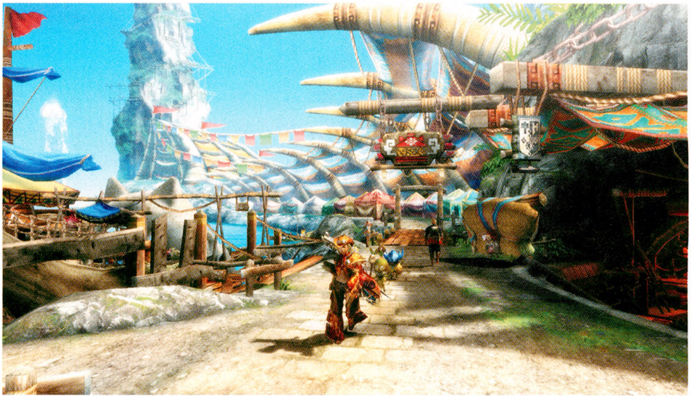
HARDCORE

Who was the main villain in Konami's 1989 beat-'em-up The Adventures of Bayou Billy?


KONAMI
THE ADVENTURES OF BAYOU BILLY

ANSWERS

EASY: Up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A; AVERAGE: Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D; HARDCORE: Godfather Gordon



High-Def Hunting

Take a first look at Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate for the Wii U console.

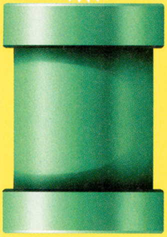
RECENTLY CAPCOM MADE its North American fans very happy with the announcement that Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate for the Wii U console (as well as the Nintendo 3DS handheld) would be landing on these shores in March 2013. Now the publisher has released the first screenshots of the beast-slaying, loot-collecting multiplayer adventure's Wii U version. As you can clearly see, this upgraded installment of the popular title looks significantly better than its 2010 counterpart on the Wii console (which was released as Monster Hunter Tri). Less obvious are the new touch-screen gameplay enhancements and the compatibility with the N3DS version of the game. Tons of customization options and more than 200 missions await Wii U owners who undertake this heavily anticipated quest.

—CHRIS H.

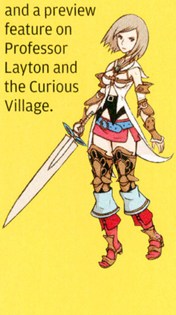
WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

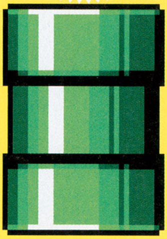
5 YEARS AGO



Nintendo Power Vol. 221 provided safe passage to the magical world of Ivalice via the issue's article on Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings. Picking up where its console predecessor left off, the underrated real-time strategy game let players get reacquainted with Vaan, Penelo, Ashe, Basch, Balthier, and Fran in a high-flying adventure for Nintendo DS. The issue also contained strategies for Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, a review of The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass, and a preview feature on Professor Layton and the Curious Village.



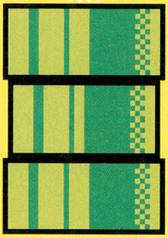
10 YEARS AGO



NINTENDO POWER
METROID PRIME

At approximately 250 pages, the November 2002 volume of Nintendo Power was one of the biggest in the magazine's history. And what was on those pages? Previews of Metroid Prime and Metroid Fusion; an extensive look at Mario Party 4; coverage of The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker; advanced strategies for Star Fox Adventures and Super Mario Sunshine; details on The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past/Four Swords for GBA; handheld tactics for Lunar Legend and Contra Advance: The Alien Wars EX; and more!

20 YEARS AGO



Darth Vader welcomed players to the dark side in Nintendo Power Vol. 42 with a cover story on Super NES classic Super Star Wars. Though it took a few liberties with the story (Luke had to fight a monster in the Sandcrawler!), Super Star Wars nonetheless did a fantastic job translating the ever-popular film into a side-scrolling action game, complete with an amazing re-creation of the John Williams soundtrack. The issue also boasted a preview of Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins for Game Boy, as well as a feature on the original Mega Man to celebrate the game's fifth anniversary.

LUKE
SCORE:
TIME: 368
SABER

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Go Ninja, Go Ninja, Go!

This 10-inch-tall Play Arts Kai action figure of the Cyborg Ninja from Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes is the perfect complement to the Solid Snake figure featured last issue. The Cyborg Ninja—aka Gray Fox, aka Frank Jaeger—is fully posable and comes with both a sword and a detachable gun-arm. It's priced at $59.99.

Across Generations

It's been a whole year since Sonic celebrated his 20th birthday, but that shouldn't stop you from enjoying the Sonic Generations Commemorative Statue from Jazwares. Inspired by last year's hit game, this piece features classic Sonic and modern Sonic kicking it into high gear on a gold-ring display base. You can find it in toy stores for $20.

Headstrong Heroes

The legendary martial artists of Street Fighter are now available in adorably big-headed form courtesy of Multiverse Studio. The first series of these Super Street Fighter IV Bubble Budds includes [L-R] Sagat, Blanka, Chun-Li, and Ryu; you can nab them for $11.99 each.

PHOTOS BY BARAK SHRAMA

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GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

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NINTENDO 3DS

1. Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon
2. Animal Crossing*
3. Fire Emblem*
4. Ace Attorney 5*
5. Disney Epic Mickey: The Power of Illusion

Wii

1. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
2. LEGO The Lord of the Rings
3. Wreck-It Ralph
4. Young Justice: Legacy
5. Karaoke Joysound

Wii U

1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Pikmin 3
3. Nintendo Land
4. Rayman Legends
5. ZombiU

NINTENDO 3DS

Ace Attorney 5*	Capcom	TBA
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	2013
Boulder Dash-XL 3D	Giant	TBA
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow—Mirror of Fate	Konami	Q1 13
Classic Games Overload: Card and Puzzle Edition	Telegames	11/12
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	HOL 12
Etrian Odyssey IV: Legends of the Titan	Atlus	Q1 13
Fire Emblem*	Nintendo	2013
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	TBA
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	Nintendo	Q1 13
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate	Capcom	3/13
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	11/12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	11/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA

Wii

Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

Wii U

007 Legends	Activision	HOL 12
Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	11/12
Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition	Warner Bros.	11/12
Bayonetta 2	Nintendo	TBA
Ben 10: Omniverse	D3	11/12
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2013	Activision	TBA
Call of Duty: Black Ops II	Activision	11/12
Darksiders II	THQ	11/12
Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two	Disney	11/12
ESPN Sports Connection	Ubisoft	11/12
Family Party: 30 Great Games Obstacle Arcade	D3	12/12
FIFA Soccer 13	Electronic Arts	11/12
Funky Barn	505	11/12
Game & Wario	Nintendo	TBA
Game Party Champions	Warner Bros.	TBA
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros.	4/13
Jeopardy	THQ	TBA
Jett Tailfin	Maximum	11/12
Just Dance 4	Ubisoft	11/12
LEGO City: Undercover	Nintendo	TBA
Madden NFL 13	Electronic Arts	11/12
Marvel's Avengers: Battle for Earth	Ubisoft	12/12
Mass Effect 3	Electronic Arts	11/12
Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate	Capcom	3/13
NBA 2K13	2K Sports	11/12
New Super Mario Bros. U	Nintendo	11/12
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	Nintendo	11/12
Nintendo Land	Nintendo	11/12
Pikmin 3	Nintendo	Q1 13
Rabbids Land	Ubisoft	11/12
Rapala Pro Bass Fishing	Activision	TBA
Rayman Legends	Ubisoft	Q1 13
Rise of the Guardians: The Video Game	D3	11/12
Scribblenauts Unlimited	Warner Bros.	11/12
SiNG Party	Nintendo	11/12
Skylanders Giants	Activision	11/12
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	Sega	11/12
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tank! Tank! Tank!	Namco Bandai	11/12
Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition	Namco Bandai	11/12
Transformers Prime: The Game	Activision	11/12
Warriors Orochi 3 Hyper	Tecmo Koei	11/12
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	TBA
Wii Fit U	Nintendo	HOL 12
Wipeout 3	Activision	11/12
The Wonderful 101	Nintendo	TBA
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	Ubisoft	11/12
ZombiU	Ubisoft	11/12
Zumba Fitness Core	Majesco	TBA

NINTENDO DS

Adventure Time: Hey Ice King! Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?!	D3	11/12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

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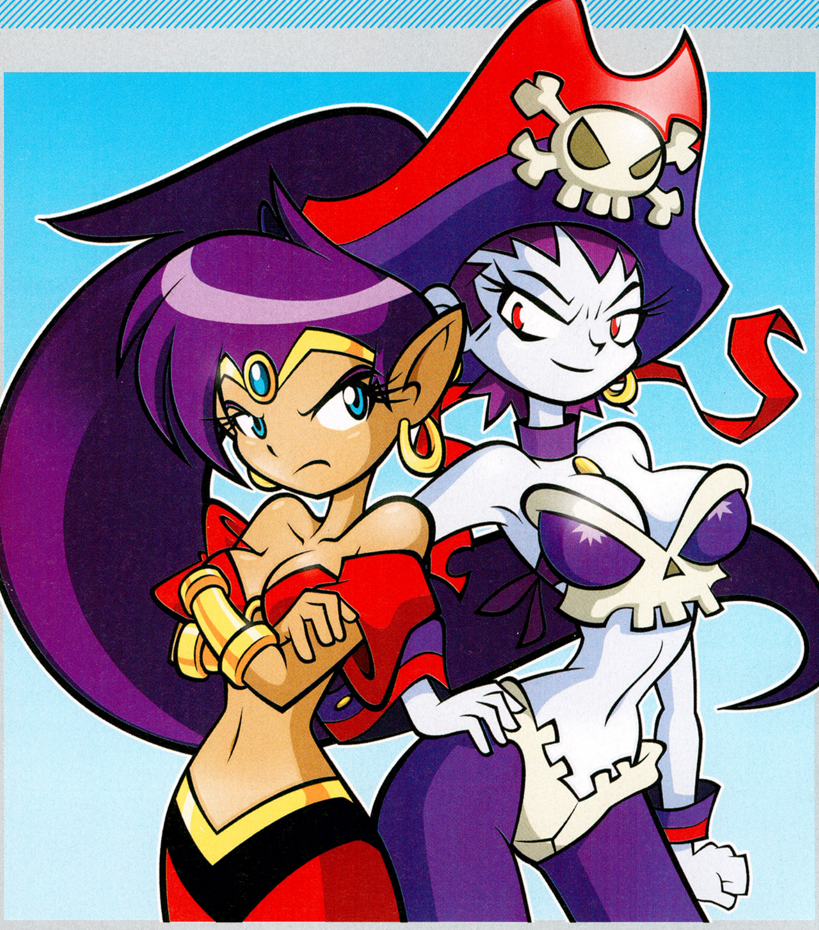
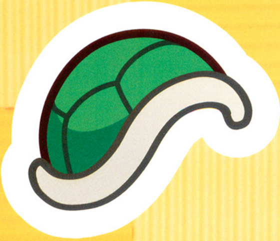


A Pirate's Life for She

Shantae is back—and teaming up with her archenemy!?—in Shantae and the Pirate's Curse for Nintendo 3DS.



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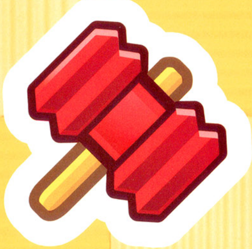

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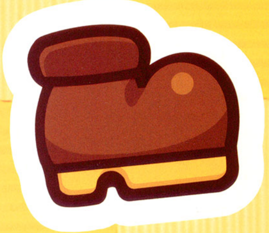

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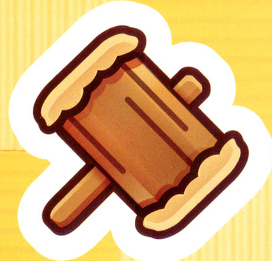

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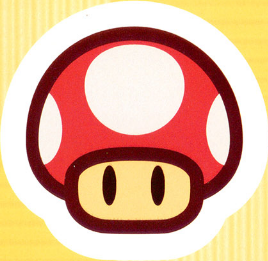

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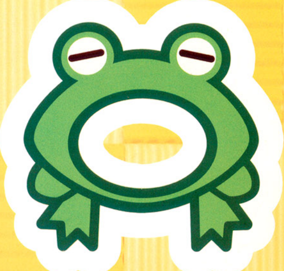
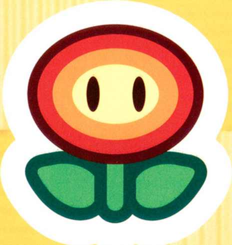


FROG SUIT



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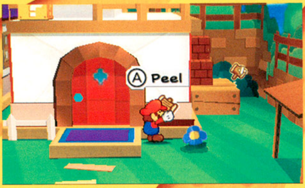

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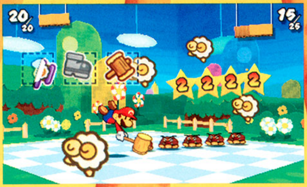
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BATTLE!

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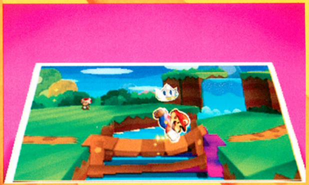

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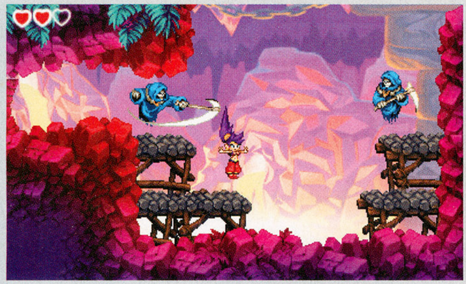
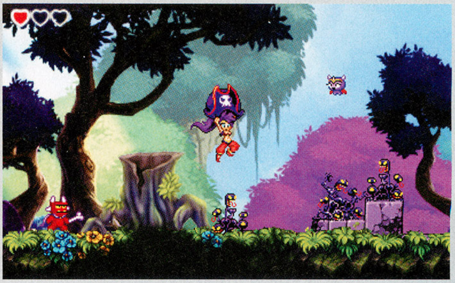




WHEN WE LAST saw Shantae, the feisty belly-dancing defender of Sequin Land, she had lost her magic powers, been forced to defeat the living embodiment of her genie heritage, and been consigned to live out her life as a normal human being. So does that mean that Shantae is ready to hang up her pantaloons and retire in peace? Not even close. Developer WayForward is bringing Shantae and the Pirate's Curse exclusively to the Nintendo 3DS handheld via the Nintendo eShop, and it promises to be the hair-whipping lass's greatest adventure yet.

When the game begins, Shantae is still getting accustomed to her new magic-free lifestyle. She continues to protect her home city of Scuttle Town from invaders—specifically, she's been battling the forces of the militant Ammo Baron—but without her spells and shape-shifting dances, the job just ain't as easy as it used to be. Before long, however, an unexpected guest shows up—Risky Boots, the sinister female pirate who siphoned away Shantae's powers at the climax of DSiWare title Shantae: Risky's Revenge. As challenging as things have been for Shantae, Risky has had it even worse. It turns out that when Shantae's magical half was destroyed, the power was dispersed into fragments, which eventually transformed Risky's Tinkerbat minions into more-powerful, more-evil forms. The Tinkerbats overthrew Risky and are now planning to revive an even greater threat—Risky's former mentor, the Pirate Master.

With Risky reduced to a near-helpless state, Shantae has little choice but to forge an uneasy alliance with her erstwhile nemesis. If they succeed in destroying all 30 thieving Tinkerbats, Shantae's magic will return, Risky will be restored to her former glory, and the Pirate Master will remain dormant; should they fail, all of Sequin Land will be enslaved. But to ensure success, Shantae will need the might to go toe-to-toe with her adversaries—she'll need to become a pirate herself.

"Shantae's life ambition is to bridge the magical side of her family and become a real genie," remarks WayForward creative director Matt Bozon. "But each adventure has taken her further from that goal. Now an opportunity presents itself, which requires taking a huge risk and siding with the bad guys for a while. While the story is still very lighthearted, it will be fun to see her turn from a magical guardian into a lawless rogue, hopefully keeping her sense of right and wrong intact."

Morally ambiguous or not, Shantae is still going to spend a big chunk of her quest exploring a large, interconnected, nonlinear, 2D game world (à la Metroid). However, since she can no longer rely on her genie powers to gain access to new areas, she'll have to conquer treacherous labyrinths throughout the land to acquire special Pirate Gear that allows her to learn new skills.

"Each new ability is both a mobility enhancement and a weapon," Bozon explains. "For example, the Bone Daggers allow players to throw deadly knives at long range, but they are also useful for lodging into walls or gears to be used as handholds. Players can also find the Flintlock Pistol, which introduces gunplay but is also a means of hitting distant switches."

Other items you'll collect include a scimitar, used for cleaving obstacles out of the way and for slicing armor from enemies; a cannon, which you fire downward to smash blocks and give Shantae a double jump; a breastplate for reducing damage; boots that enable you to dash so you can avoid traps and run on top of water; an anchor, which you use like a grappling hook; a hat that lets you glide great distances while jumping; and remote-detonated mines for triggering devices and destroying barricades.

Furthermore, each piece of Pirate Gear can be upgraded at a shop—the powered-up pistol will inflict more damage, for example, and after

Can Shantae defeat a horde of creepy snake women without her genie powers? Only the developers at WayForward know for sure!

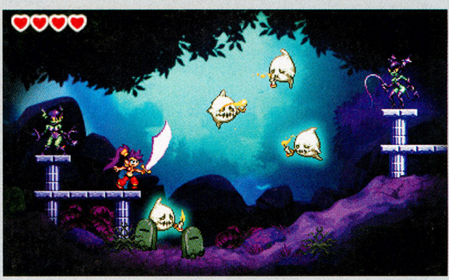
enhancing the cannon you'll be able to perform a triple jump and eventually even a quadruple jump. Clearly, Shantae's arsenal is much more diverse than before, but longtime fans needn't worry—you'll still use her hair whip as the most common way to dispatch foes, and you'll still get to bust out enchanting dance moves, which are useful for attracting pickups and charming weaker enemies.

Shantae's quest will take her all over Sequin Land, from her familiar lighthouse abode to lush forests, volcanic regions, and exotic locales such as Sequin Land Palace. "Previous series locations will return, reimagined, along with quite a few new locations, too," Bozon reveals. "Shantae's home of Scuttle Town is now under the rule of the Ammo Baron, changing it from a hub of activity into an action-packed bad-guy area. The journey crosses over into the underworld, and up to the heavens.... Shantae's covering more ground than ever this time out."

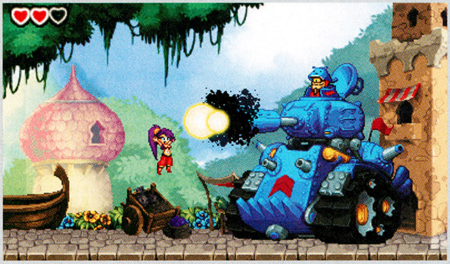
Despite the fact that Shantae and the Pirate's Curse should be significantly larger than Risky's Revenge—it will be comparable to full-sized retail products—exploring should be easier than ever thanks to the inclusion of a new, more-detailed, Super Metroid-style map system. But you'll still have to stay on your toes; as you traverse the environments you'll encounter more-dynamic enemies that will challenge players in a variety of ways, allowing for deeper, more enjoyable combat.

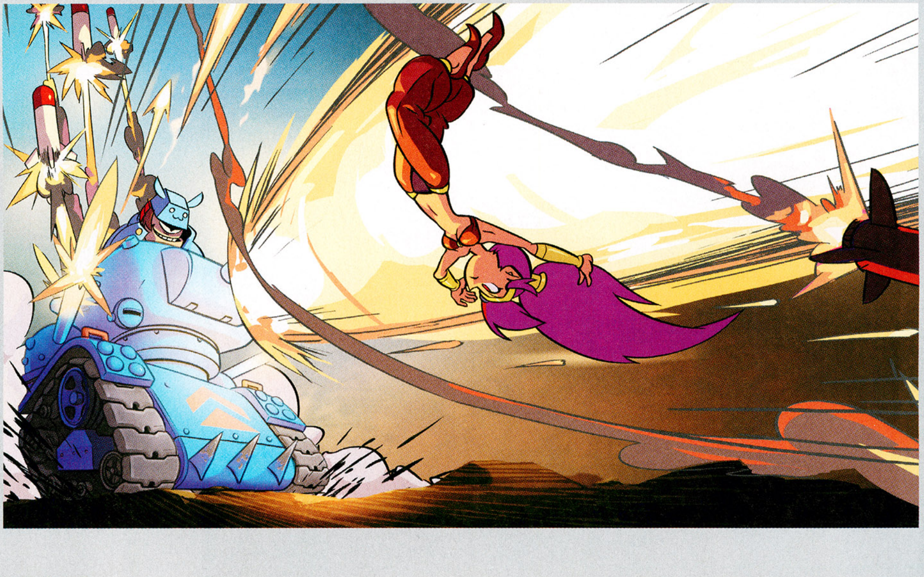
In addition, there's a lot to see and do off the beaten path. Not only will you be able to find Heart Squid collectibles (which can be melted down to extend Shantae's health meter), but inventive players will be able to find alternate routes through the world, allowing them to proceed through the adventure as they see fit.

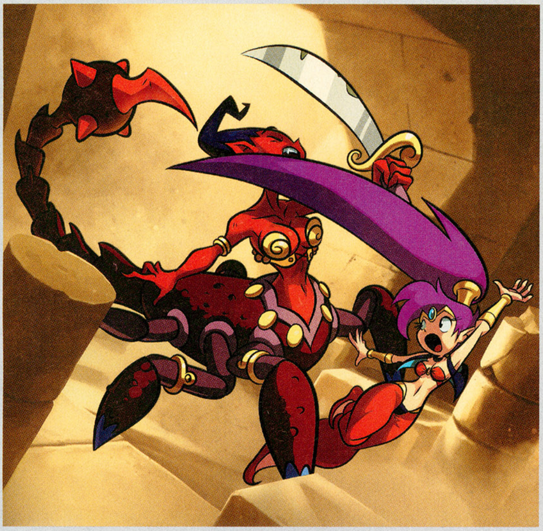
"This game takes a brand-new approach to the secondary play style," Bozon tells us. "Players can



[Above] Shantae wields her scimitar to make short work of restless spirits.
[Below] The evil Ammo Baron's forces aren't going down without a fight!







reach out-of-the-way places based on their skill, not just the moves they possess. To encourage this type of skill-based exploration we dropped the linear structure and went for a more open-quest-style game. Like in the original NES Zelda game, players can progress the game in many ways other than the obvious one, taking some parts out of order. Our hope is that players will have fun sequence-breaking the game in order to truly master it."

Naturally, another significant change is the inclusion of stereoscopic 3D visuals. As is apparent from the screenshots in this article, the overall art style is very close to that of the spectacular-looking Risky's Revenge, but multilayered 3D backgrounds promise to make this title look even better than its predecessor.

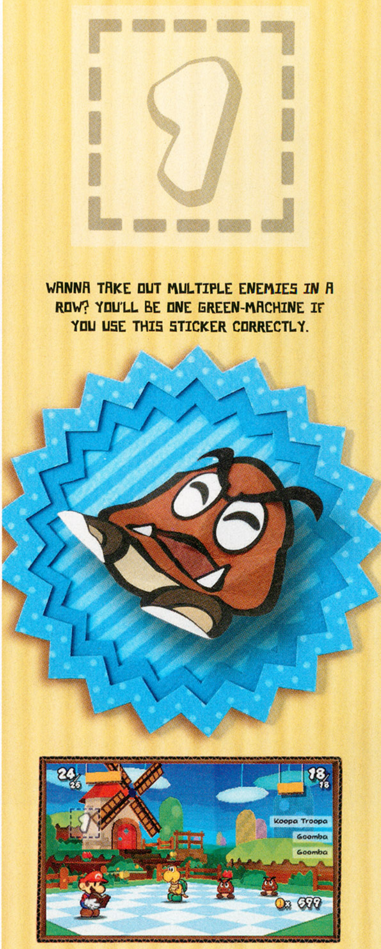
"The stereoscopic visuals are very similar to our Mighty Switch Force! title," Bozon comments. "We're using many painted background layers sandwiched around traditional pixel-art playfields to create a brand-new look that's very impressive on the 3D screen. We are also playing with a Magic Telescope item, which would reveal secret passages visible only when 3D mode is on. We're still experimenting with 3D features at this time, so things may change. But expect to see some great illustration work, and enemies popping out of the screen from time to time in addition to the layered presentation."

Other elements will be very familiar to Shantae fans. Series composer Jake Kaufman is back to deliver another epic soundtrack, and you can look forward to the return of numerous popular supporting characters, including scatterbrained Uncle Mimic, troublesome zombie Rottytops, Shantae's friends Sky and Bolo, and even minor NPCs such as Barracuda Joe. But not every reunion will be a happy one—due to Shantae's alliance with Risky Boots, many of her associations become strained as she walks the line between good and evil.

One relationship that seems to only be getting stronger, however, is that between WayForward and the dedicated Shantae fan base. "Fans have been the backbone of this series from the start," asserts Bozon, "and on behalf of the multiple teams who've worked on Shantae games, I'd like to extend our gratitude. We listen to and read blogs and message boards, collect and save emails and Tweets.... I can't think of another series that's been carried so long and far entirely on the shoulders of Nintendo fans."

The results of that heartfelt fan support will be realized when Shantae and the Pirate's Curse comes to the Nintendo eShop in 2013.

—CHRIS H.



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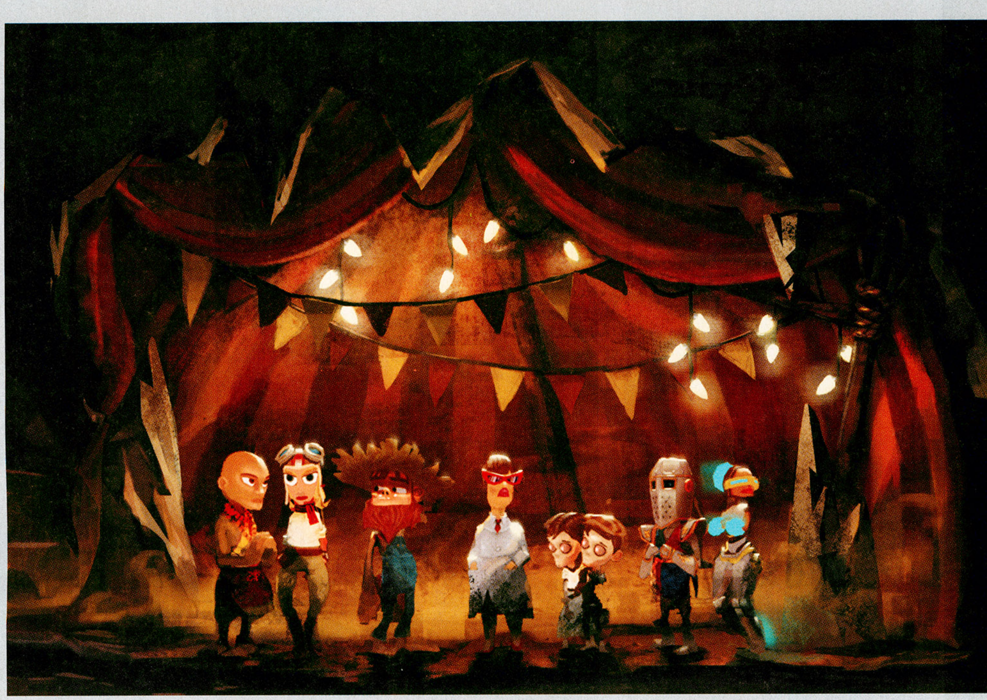


Cave of Wonders

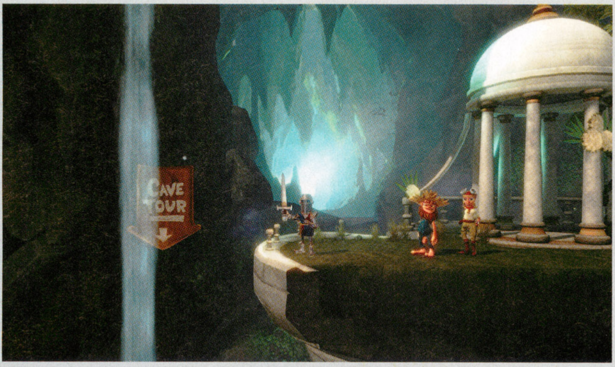
Graphic adventures meet platformers in Sega and Double Fine's The Cave for Wii U.

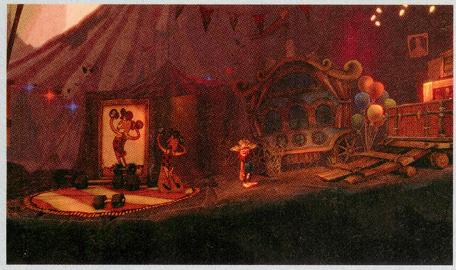
THANKS TO RECENT TITLES like Tales of Monkey Island and Back to the Future: The Game, the long-dormant graphic-adventure genre has seen a welcome resurgence. Now Ron Gilbert, one of the pioneers of that puzzle-filled gameplay style and the creator of the Monkey Island series, has teamed with Double Fine and Sega to bring a new twist to the graphic adventure. The Cave turns the traditionally slow-paced genre into a platformer.

Taking a cue from one of Gilbert's earliest hits, Maniac Mansion, The Cave asks players to choose a party of three characters from a group of contenders. During the game, you can freely switch control from one party member to another, and doing so is essential to solving all of the puzzles that you'll face. The characters each have their own unique skill sets and abilities, which forces you to seriously consider how you'll approach obstacles and solve puzzles.

There's a nice array of character choices: the time traveler can teleport over short distances; the scientist is capable of hacking computers; the adventurer uses a grappling hook to reach faraway places; the twins can create a mirror image of themselves; the monk can move objects via telekinesis; the hillbilly can hold his breath for extended periods of time; and the knight carries a shield and can magically glide while falling. The puzzles that you encounter will require different solutions depending on the trio you bring into the cave.

For example, one puzzle required us to stop water from dripping on a fuse box. Eventually we





[Left] There are certain areas within the cave that are exclusive to specific characters. This carnival is the hillbilly's domain. He's hoping to win enough tickets to earn a teddy bear in order to impress one of the sideshow performers, the amazing "two-legged girl."

came upon our solution: a bucket we retrieved out of a well. With our team of the hillbilly, the time traveler, and the scientist, getting the bucket required multiple steps and some ingenuity. Had we brought along the monk, however, he could have easily floated the bucket out of the well with his special powers.

To maintain the fast pace of a platformer, The Cave doesn't have the standard graphic-adventure inventory screen. Instead, each character can carry one item at a time, which means lots of teamwork is necessary to succeed. Although it's easy enough to swap between party members on the fly, you needn't be alone on your journey. Friends can drop in and out of the game at any time to play as your teammates. (All of you are free to switch between the three active characters.)

So why is your motley crew venturing into a cave? Well, that's a bit of a mystery. The cave is actually a sentient being (just go with it) that has brought these people together to discover secrets about themselves within its caverns. As you progress through the cave, wall paintings reveal bits of the characters' pasts and what they might become. The cave also acts as your guide through the adventure, and its wise-cracking commentary on your progress helps set the game's irreverent tone. We look forward to having our wits tested and our funny bones tickled when The Cave hits the Wii U eShop in early 2013. **—PHIL T.**

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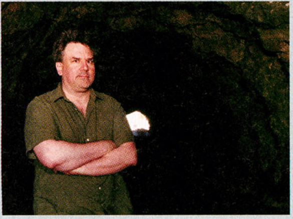
Captain Caveman

When heading into a cave, it's a good idea to have an experienced explorer by your side. That's why we went straight to Ron Gilbert; he's the creator of The Cave and has been making excellent video games for about 30 years. He gave us unique insight on what we can look forward to in the depths of The Cave.



NINTENDO POWER Where did the idea for The Cave come from?

RON GILBERT The Cave is an idea that's been rolling around in my head for close to 25 years. It was an idea that predates Maniac Mansion. The concept was these three characters would go exploring down into this odd talking cave. The game wasn't an adventure game and there were only three characters, not the seven that we see in The Cave now, but the core idea stayed with me. Every few years it would pop back into my head and I'd think about it, and then it'd go away. A couple of years ago I was talking to Tim Schafer and told him about the idea. He liked it and wanted to know if I'd come to Double Fine to make it with them. Sure! Maybe it was time for the game to be made.

The character-selection aspect of The Cave is highly reminiscent of your classic game Maniac Mansion. Would you consider The Cave to be a sort of spiritual successor?

Yeah, I would. I always wanted to revisit the idea of choosing three characters from a group. I thought it worked really well in Maniac Mansion and I've learned a lot of lessons since then.

Are there different endings in The Cave depending on which characters you choose?

Kind of.... Each of the characters has a reason for going into The Cave and a story that goes along with that, so you will get to see each person's story and its conclusion. When you play with three different characters, you'll see three different little stories, plus whole new areas of The Cave to explore.

In Maniac Mansion, some of the characters were a bit unbalanced (some being noticeably more useful than others). How do you go about correcting these balance issues in The Cave?

That was one of the lessons I learned from Maniac Mansion. When Gary [Winnick] and I designed Maniac Mansion, we weren't really thinking about the balance of the characters and how they would be used. It just grew organically and, as you've stated, it got pretty unbalanced. With The Cave I knew this was going to be an issue so we tried to keep things a bit more even with respect to the seven characters. I don't think we did a perfect job of balancing, but it is a lot better than Maniac Mansion was and everyone has an interesting and unique story and [their own] areas of The Cave. Playing with different characters is going to feel different and new.

What made you decide on seven possible characters? Were there other characters that didn't make the cut?

When I started designing the game, I made a big list of all the characters that seemed interesting. The list grew to around 30 characters, then over the course of a few months we trimmed the list down. You do actually see a couple of the "cut" characters on your journey through The Cave....

Share your thoughts on the resurgence of the adventure-game genre.

It's great! I don't feel adventure games ever died, or even got less popular; the issue was other genres got a lot more popular and despite there being hundreds of thousands of people that still loved playing and bought adventure games, they just weren't sexy anymore. As the number of people that play games now goes up, and the audience becomes more "casual," adventure games are gaining popularity due to them being about characters and story. People like that.

Tell us about the creative process when you're developing convoluted adventure-game puzzles.

I always start with the end objective to a puzzle, then work my way backwards through it, adding layers until it feels like it has enough complexity. I find that works well for me because I can stop at any point and the puzzle will still work.

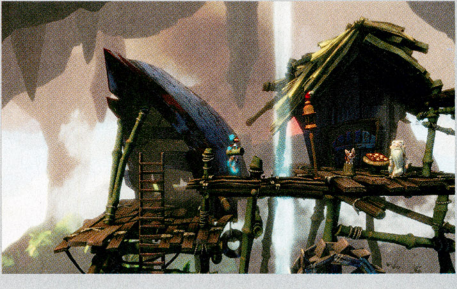
Some adventure-game puzzles can be pretty obtuse. How do you create a challenging, logical puzzle instead of an unfair puzzle that requires the player to be in the exact same state of mind as the puzzle designer?

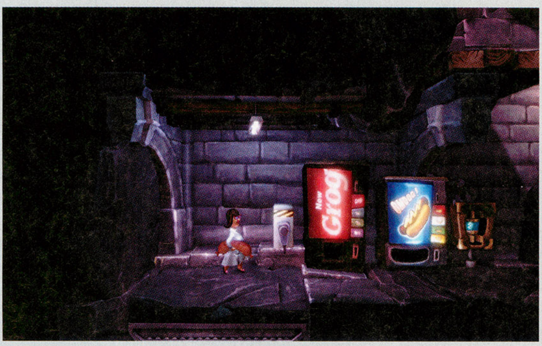
Good question. I don't know that I have an answer to it except for "it just feels right."

Adventure games are typically more associated with PC gaming than with consoles. What challenges do you face in developing an adventure game that will appeal to the console audience?

The thing that was exciting to me about trying an adventure game on a console was the feeling of direct control. In classic point-and-click adventure games you were directing the characters to go places and do things, but with a controller, you are actually making them do things. One of the challenges we faced was in a mouse-driven game you can scan your cursor over the screen and see objects that you can't interact with. In the console version that's hard to do. The other issue was I wanted to get rid of inventory. Each of the characters in The Cave

Levers and Such





[Above] Nothing goes better with a giant sausage than a refreshing can of New Grog. And nothing is more enjoyable than spotting random Monkey Island references.

can carry one thing. It was a challenge to design an adventure game with such a limited inventory, but it was a fun challenge.

What inspired you to add platforming elements to an adventure game? What do you feel the platforming adds to the game?
The thing that always bugged me about classic adventure games was moving from one place to another could get really boring, just watching the character walk. Since we had a controller for The Cave, we could make movement fun. The platforming part of the game is really light; it's not a game about timing or making double jumps. I just wanted to make movement interesting and fun.

At what point during The Cave's development did you decide to bring it to Wii U?
We always knew we wanted to support the Wii U—we just needed to wait a while until we got all the tech specs to see if it was doable.

How involved were you with the Wii U version and any of the features specific to that platform?
The Wii U version is being built concurrently with the other platforms. We don't view it as a port, so for me and the team it's just a matter of looking at everything that is going on with the project, and the Wii U is one part of that.

Your games are known for their sense of humor. What difficulties do you encounter in making a game funny?
I don't know. I've never found it hard to make games funny. Making a serious game would be hard for me.

You and Tim Schafer worked together at LucasArts. What's it like being back together with him again?
It's fun. Back at LucasArts I was his boss and I got to boss him around. Now he's my boss and gets to boss me around. He might be taking his revenge.

The Cave seems a bit outside Sega's typical wheelhouse. How did you come to work with the company?
We spoke to several publishers about The Cave and Sega really seemed to get what we were doing with the game. It's horrible when you have a publisher that has a different vision for the game than you do, but with Sega they really shared that vision and have been great to work with.

The Cave has a multiplayer mode, but it doesn't support online play. What was behind that decision?
I really view adventure games as the original multiplayer games. I remember being a kid and sitting around the computer with my friends playing adventure games. We'd all be shouting out solutions to puzzles and things to try to the person who was doing the typing. It was a lot of fun and I wanted to capture that with The Cave, but you can actually take control of one of the three characters and help, not just shout out things for the other person to do. I also wanted to create an experience that siblings or parents and children could share, playing at the same time on equal footing and having fun. It just felt better if that happened "in person."

Oh, what *is* the secret of Monkey Island?
"What is the secret of Monkey Island?" is going to be on my tombstone. I just know it.

3
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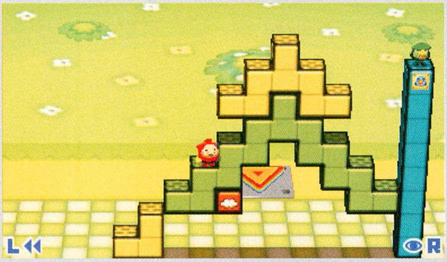
Crashing Pushmo's Party

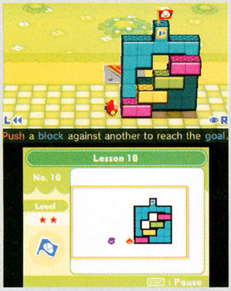
Crashmo, the sequel to Nintendo eShop smash Pushmo, will yank your brain in unexpected directions.

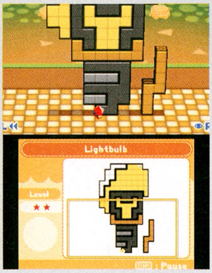
WELL, THAT DIDN'T take long! It's been less than a year since Pushmo launched to an enthusiastic critical reception, and portly hero Mallo is already back for a new downloadable adventure for the Nintendo 3DS. This time the lovable lunk must push, pull, and break apart scores of oddly shaped structures to reach the hundred-some birds needed to power a flying contraption in Crashmo Park.

In Crashmo, Mallo can slide, pull, or push any piece of a structure in any direction he wants, and as much as he wants. The puzzles are far more three-dimensional than they were in Pushmo; Mallo will now need to circle around them to push and pull from every possible angle. The crashing comes into play when one block is being held up by another; push away the supporting block, and the other will crash down to earth. Reaching the lost birds is often a matter of arranging the blocks in just the right way so that one good push will send them tumbling into a usable staircase. With your brain being forced to think in so many directions at once, Crashmo quickly amps up that puzzle-solving tickle in your grey matter from a faint buzz to a satisfying thrum.

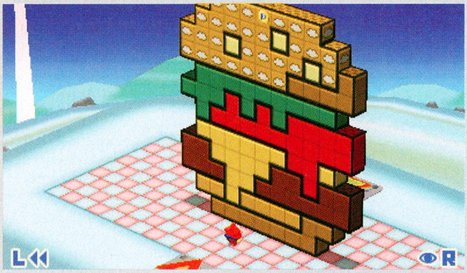
And, of course, Crashmo boasts the features that made its predecessor so beloved, including a robust level-creation tool and the ability to rewind time to undo a series of bad moves without having to reset the level. The game is currently scheduled to come crashing onto the Nintendo eShop on November 22. —**CASEY L.**







[Right] Pulling on those blocks seems like a bright idea!

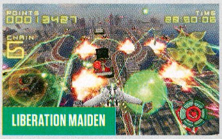


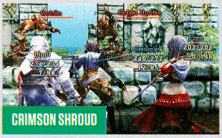
Guild Membership

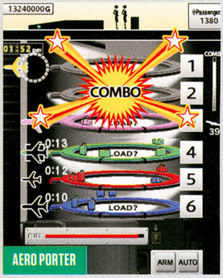
Titles from Level-5's Guild01 are coming to North America through the Nintendo eShop.

IF YOU'RE A gaming connoisseur who's looking for pocket-sized fun from some of Japan's most talented creators, you're in luck. Nintendo has announced that three of the four games from Level-5's diverse anthology title Guild01 are coming to North American Nintendo 3DS systems via the Nintendo eShop. (There's no word on the fate of the fourth game.) The first one to see release will be Liberation Maiden, an anime-inspired shooter from No More Heroes creator Suda51. Playing as the president of New Japan, you'll take to the skies to save your country from invaders in this futuristic, action-packed title. Also on the way are Aero Porter (an airport-themed luggage-sorting puzzle game from Seaman creator Yoot Saito) and Crimson Shroud (a tabletop-style RPG from Yasumi Matsuno, the man behind gems such as Final Fantasy Tactics and Final Fantasy XII). Liberation Maiden, Aero Porter, and Crimson Shroud are scheduled for release before the end of 2012.

—**CHRIS H.**


LIBERATION MAIDEN


CRIMSON SHROUD



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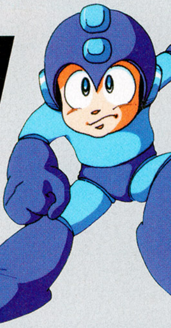
Answers: 1) Shell 2) Jump 3) Fire Flower
4) Hammer 5) Eekhammer

Mega Manniversary



Celebrate 25 years of Mega Man with these Virtual Console classics.

MEGA MAN MAY look youthful, but the fact of the matter is that this December marks the 25th anniversary of the Blue Bomber's debut. Sadly, there haven't been many new Mega Man games recently, but you can still commemorate the occasion by breaking out an E-Tank and playing one (or more) of the weapon-swiping hero's classic adventures—several of which are conveniently available for download on Virtual Console. A number of NES Mega Man titles have even recently been released for the Nintendo 3DS handheld via the Nintendo eShop in Japan, and they may be coming to North America soon. For now, however, you can party like it's 1987 with the Mega Man games shown on these pages. —**CHRIS H.**

Mega Man

Originally On: NES (1987)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 500 Points

The one that started it all! This is the game that introduced the world to Mega Man, his weapon-copying abilities, and his arch enemy Dr. Wily. The combination of excellent 8-bit graphics, catchy music, intense action, and strategic weapon use set the stage for many sequels to come.

Mega Fact Mega Man is blue because the NES had more shades of blue available than shades of any other color.

Power Tip If you press the Select (or Minus) Button while attacking bosses, your weapons will inflict extra damage!

Mega Man 2

Originally On: NES (1989)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 500 Points

Considered by many to be the best Mega Man game, Mega Man 2 improves upon its predecessor in every way. Better visuals, more levels, cooler weapons, new modes of transportation—this one has everything a gamer could want, including an awesome final battle with an epic twist.

Mega Fact In interviews, former Mega Man producer Keiji Inafune has called this his favorite Mega Man game.

Power Tip When you fight Metal Man for the second time, you can defeat him with just one or two shots of his own weapon, the Metal Blade!

Mega Man 3

Originally On: NES (1990)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 500 Points

In Mega Man 3, Dr. Wily has finally seen the error of his ways and joins forces with Dr. Light to create the ultimate peace-keeping robot. But—spoiler alert!—Wily is secretly still up to no good, and Mega Man is forced to fight all-new Robot Masters, as well as the bosses from Mega Man 2.

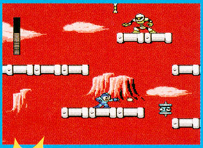
Mega Fact This game introduced Mega Man's brother Proto Man and his dog Rush.

Power Tip Enter the password A6 (red) to start the game with nine E-Tanks!

Mega Man 4

Originally On: NES (1992)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 500 Points

A new sinister scientist has appeared on the scene, and it's up to Mega Man to stop him! Now armed with the ability to charge up his Mega Buster shots, Mega Man must halt the robot rampage of Toad Man, Bright Man, Pharaoh Man, Ring Man, Dust Man, Dive Man, Drill Man, and Skull Man.



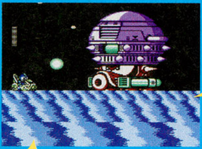
Mega Fact Dr. Cossack, the game's villain, was at one point named Dr. Vice.

Power Tip To find the Wire Adapter, fall down the pit in Dive Man's stage after defeating the second robotic whale!

Mega Man 5

Originally On: NES (1992)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 500 Points

Is Mega Man's brother Proto Man a friend or an enemy? In Mega Man 5 he seems to be the latter; he's apparently kidnapped Dr. Light and unleashed eight maniacal new Robot Masters. Treacherous environments—including a stage with reverse gravity—will keep Mega Man on his toes.



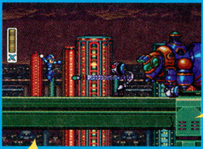
Mega Fact Mega Man 5 was used as the basis for Japanese educational cartoons.

Power Tip If you collect the letters M-E-G-A-M-A-N-V, you can summon the robotic bird Beat. He's very useful against the final boss!

Mega Man X

Originally On: Super NES (1994)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 800 Points

Set 100 years after the original Mega Man series, this game tells the story of the next generation of Mega Man. Supported by his ally, Zero, Mega Man X must battle the animal-inspired Mavericks and their leader, Sigma, using new skills such as a dash maneuver and the ability to climb walls.



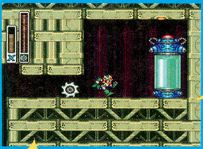
Mega Fact Zero was originally conceived of as a radical redesign of Mega Man.

Power Tip After acquiring all weapons, items, and upgrades, leap from the final mine cart in Armored Armadillo's stage to collect the health item above the door to the boss's room, then perish. Do this five times, and you'll find the secret fireball upgrade!

Mega Man X2

Originally On: Super NES (1995)
Now On: Wii Virtual Console for 800 Points

Mega Man X2 builds upon the winning formula of its predecessor by introducing new weapons, Mavericks, and upgrades (including an air dash). There are also three optional bosses—known as the X Hunters—that you can fight in order to retrieve the shattered pieces of X's fallen comrade.



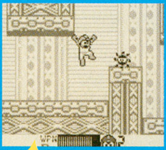
Mega Fact Mega Man X2 used a unique CX4 coprocessor chip to create special graphical effects.

Power Tip Hidden upgrade capsules can be found in the Overdrive Ostrich, Morph Moth, Crystal Snail, and Wheel Gator stages!

Mega Man: Dr. Wily's Revenge

Originally On: Game Boy (1991)
Now On: Nintendo 3DS Virtual Console for $3.99

In the first Mega Man game for Game Boy, Dr. Wily has restored eight of the Robot Masters that originally appeared in Mega Man and Mega Man 2 for the NES. To survive this challenging encounter, you'll have to fight the first four in totally redesigned stages, then battle the others in Dr. Wily's base.



Mega Fact This game introduced Enker, the first of the Mega Man Killers. He later appeared in Mega Man V, Mega Man 10, and Mega Man's Soccer.

Power Tip Enter the password A2, A3, B4, C2, C3 to skip to Dr. Wily's fortress!

Get Your Weapons Ready!

WHERE DOES MEGA MAN go from here? To find out, we talked to Capcom's senior vice president Christian Svensson and senior community manager Brett Elston.

NINTENDO POWER What does Mega Man mean to Capcom?

CHRISTIAN SVENSSON To me, I think it's a link to our classic roots and our dedication to extremely tight, focused gameplay as a company. Mega Man is one of our few brands that has stood the test of time, been expanded in many ways with a variety of offshoots and has still survived. There's something to be said for that.

What do you think has been the secret to the character's enduring popularity over the past 25 years?

BRETT ELSTON Mega Man's seen a lot of revisions over the years, so the new coat of paint helps keep the character and trappings unique for a new audience. But beyond the new takes, the classic stuff has endured in a way that few other games have. Mega Man played great when retro was new, when retro was old, and even today, when retro is back in style.

Why should players who haven't tried any Mega Man games yet give them a shot?

BE To me, they're the epitome of great game design. You can't play Mega Man 2 and feel anything other than awe. It's a perfect video game and essential to understanding what makes games fun.

Are there plans to bring additional Mega Man games to Virtual Console?

CS As part of the celebration of the 25th anniversary, we're trying to bring MM1 through 6 to the N3DS Nintendo eShop; however, there are still some hurdles to overcome before we can definitively say it's going to happen.

BE And if we can sneak in the Game Boy Mega Man V into the mix, that'd be pretty sweet, too.

What does the future hold for Mega Man?

CS I can say with certainty that you've not seen the last of the Blue Bomber on consoles and handhelds, and, with luck, we'll be celebrating his 50th anniversary, including all of the games you're going to enjoy over the next 25 years. That said, an issue we've had in the past has been talking about games and announcing them before we're certain they're going to come out, which unfortunately has lead to profound disappointment for many fans. So for now, I'm going to have to stay mum about any details.

EVALUATION STATION

N3DS DOWNLOAD

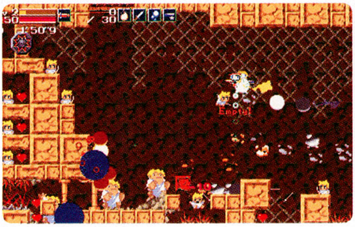
BALLOON POP REMIX

PUBLISHER: UFO INTERACTIVE
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: $7.99

Facing a grid of multicolored balloons, players draw lines to pop some in an effort to align like-colored clusters. As clusters pop, new balloons flood the bottom of the grid, and—hopefully—combos ensue. While the production values are solid and the content is generous (story, puzzle, and endless modes, plus minigames), the role of luck—your survival depends on combos, over which you have little control—sticks in the craw. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD



CAVE STORY

PUBLISHER: NICALIS **GENRE:** ADVENTURE **PRICE:** $9.99

Just to avoid confusion, no, this isn't the same game as last year's retail release Cave Story 3D. That one was a remake of the original with redone graphics and 3D-modeled characters. This version of Cave Story is truer to the initial release with its pixel graphics and chiptune soundtrack. Retro appeal aside, the game itself is an outstanding Metroid-style action-adventure with an interesting world to explore and a cast of charming characters. The controls are spot-on, and the weapon-upgrade system is simple yet satisfying. In addition to playing well, this enhanced N3DS version features widescreen support and challenge modes that weren't included in the WiiWare and DSiWare versions of the game. Of course, this iteration of Cave Story is also in 3D, which works extremely well with the gorgeous sprites. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD

THE DENPA MEN: THEY CAME BY WAVE

PUBLISHER: GENIUS SONORITY **GENRE:** RPG **PRICE:** $9.99

Denpa Men offers a mix of gameplay conventions that will either instantly appeal to you, or turn you off. To start, you'll collect Denpa foot soldiers (who inhabit radio waves) via AR-waving your camera as needed to capture minions. A variety of men (differing in appearance and utility) flit about, and alternate Wi-Fi hotspots offer different stock. Of course, collecting and nourishing your army serves the game's primary function: dungeon-crawling. You'll form parties suited to the dungeon at hand, then crawl forth in rudimentary, turn-based JRPG fashion in search (mostly) of treasure. Whether this all sounds slick or lame depends on your taste, but fine production values ensure that fans of this sort of thing won't be disappointed. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD

FRACTURED SOUL

PUBLISHER: ENDGAME STUDIOS **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** $11.99

Originally slated as a retail release, Fractured Soul is a 2D action-platformer with a twist: the action takes place on the top and bottom screens simultaneously. The level layout is the same on each screen, but obstacles, enemies, and platforms are arranged so that you must switch your character back and forth between the two parallel dimensions to maneuver around and avoid danger. Having to focus on both screens makes for some intense platforming, and Fractured Soul pulls it off surprisingly smoothly with streamlined controls and clever level design. The challenges are mind-bending and fun, and various environmental changes that appear on only the top screen—such as ice, lava, and reversed gravity—give the shifting-screens dynamic an additional layer of depth and trickiness. —**CODY M.**

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD

HEAVY FIRE: SPECIAL OPERATIONS 3D

PUBLISHER: TEYON
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: $4.99

This installment of Heavy Fire offers more FPS-on-rails action set in the Middle East. Play begins by choosing a profile type—recon, gunner, or support. From there you'll deploy, playing virtual whack-a-mole as mindless bad guys run to and fro in front of your hungry reticle. Though solid graphics and a small selection of guns keep things from being utterly demoralizing, it all boils down to a lot of brainless boredom at the cost of five bucks. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS DOWNLOAD

POKÉMON DREAM RADAR

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** $2.99

Pokémon Dream Radar is a strange game to review. Taken on its own, it's not very good, even considering its low price. The shooting gallery-style gameplay isn't terribly exciting given that you're only shooting clouds and the glowing orbs that spring forth from them, and the promise of catching Pokémon in the real world thanks to the N3DS camera and augmented-reality technology is diminished due to the fact that most of the time (with the occasional exception), the Pokémon are represented by more glowing orbs. If you're playing Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2, however, Dream Radar becomes a lot more interesting. It's a nice, easy way to track down valuable items, as well as the Therian Formes of Tornadus, Thundurus, and Landorus, all of which can then be transferred into those titles. In that case—totally worth it. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

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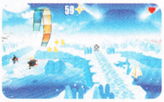

RISING BOARD 3D

PUBLISHER: ODENIX STUDIO
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $2.99

Rising Board 3D seems rather promising at first glance. What's not to love about a penguin on a surfboard? Furthermore, the game's graphics are good, and the smooth handling of your surfer makes busting tricks easy and fun. However, it's odd that you're always placed in a random level, and there's no real objective but to surf indefinitely or until you deplete your life meter. Collecting points throughout levels eventually allows you to buy new boards, but the action quickly becomes stale. —CODY M.

Hmmm...

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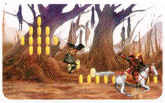


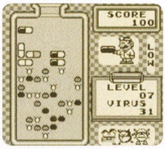
SAMURAI G

PUBLISHER: UFO INTERACTIVE
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $1.99

Samurai G offers endless-run action set in Japan's mythical past. As you're hurled forward at a robust gallop, you'll jump or slice your way through shuriken-hurling ninjas, kunai-tossing hang gliders, traps of various ilk, and other perils. The hand-drawn graphics are slick and the price is a steal, but know this: it's difficult. Surviving more than a few seconds requires constancy in the "on your toes" department, and surviving long-term (note that one-hit kills abound) will require staggering concentration. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



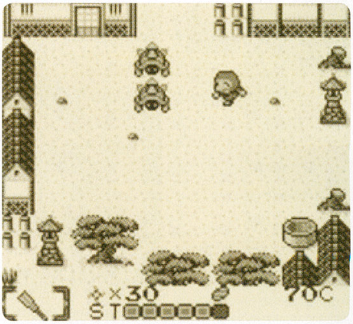
DR. MARIO

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1990
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: $3.99

Dr. Mario always lingered in the shadow of Tetris, but it's actually a solid (if occasionally a bit too laid-back) puzzle game in its own right. The later stages do become more challenging, and they require the player to think and move quickly in order to line up the multihued vitamins to most effectively eliminate the lingering viruses. Oh, and the soundtrack is pretty darn fantastic. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



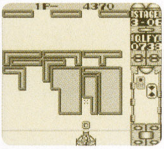
MYSTICAL NINJA STARRING GOEMON

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1998 **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
GENRE: ACTION **PRICE:** $2.99

As a huge fan of Konami's Goemon series, I'm pained to say that this game is flat-out awful. For a title released so late in the Game Boy's life, it's way ugly. The bland environments, repeated enemies, sluggish controls, and dull combat make exploration frustrating and tedious. Not the little ninja's finest hour. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



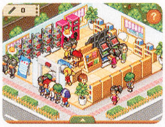
QUARTH

PLATFORM: KONAMI
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1990
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: $2.99

Quarth is part space shooter, part Tetris: as shapes fall from the top of your screen, you fire shots from your ship that add squares to the descending mass. Once you've augmented a shape into a square/rectangle, the shape disappears and you're awarded points and—sometimes—a special item. Generally it's very straightforward, which makes for a quick trip to tedium. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



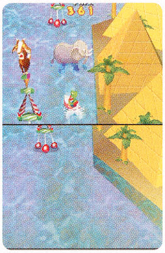
BOOKSTORE DREAM

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: ALTERNATIVE
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

The first bookstore-management sim to date, Bookstore Dream is a rather successful effort. Although the instructions are a little confusing at first, the game is fun and simple once you get the hang of managing cash flow, attracting customers, and building relationships with publishers by selling their books. There's a lot of watching and waiting after making investments, but it's fairly gratifying to customize your little shop and see it grow. —CODY M.

Recommended

DSiWARE



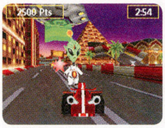
CRAZY HUNTER

PUBLISHER: ENJOYUP GAMES
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

First you'll play a shallow, repetitive, and unnecessary boat-racing minigame in which your goal is to hit goat-straddled buoys (don't ask). Next you'll play a shallow, repetitive, and unnecessary crane minigame in an effort to scoop up said goats (don't ask). Awful. —PATRICK C.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



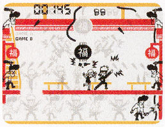
KART KRASHERS

PUBLISHER: BIG JOHN GAMES
GENRE: RACING
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Unlike most kart-based games, Kart Krashers has you collecting stars placed throughout obstacle courses to earn points rather than racing around a track. Each stage has a multitude of challenges, so there's a lot of replay value. However, the often-cramped courses don't mix well with the game's controls and speeds, which mirror traditional racing titles. Constantly needing to slow and stop to maneuver your vehicle feels uncomfortably choppy. —CODY M.

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



RETRO POCKET

PUBLISHER: UFO INTERACTIVE
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

This collection contains eight original titles that draw heavy inspiration from Nintendo's classic Game & Watch series. Although the games are enjoyable high-score contests, the package suffers from a lack of variety. (The "collect three items and drop them somewhere" formula is used a lot.) An enhanced-graphics mode like those in the Game & Watch Gallery titles would have been nice, too. Still, it's worth checking out if you're into old-school gaming. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

EVALUATION STATION

Wii DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO DSi DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOAD

WiiWARE

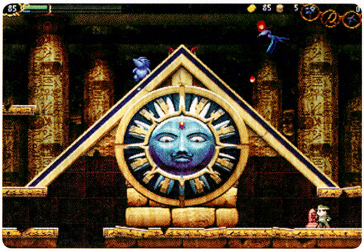
DROP ZONE: UNDER FIRE

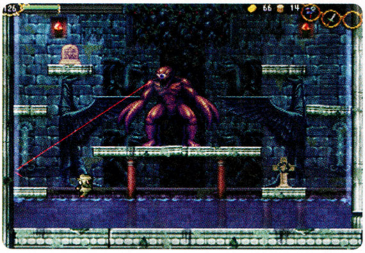
PUBLISHER: **SELECTSOFT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
PRICE: **500 POINTS**

In each level of Drop Zone: Under Fire, you leap out of a plane and guide your descent with airbrakes and speed boosts while snagging point bonuses, zipping through checkpoints, avoiding lasers, and shooting down alien ships on your way to deliver care packages at the bottom. The quality graphics and solid soundtrack really complement the exciting action, and although the HUD clutters the screen, falling from a first-person perspective is still fun. —CODY M.

Recommended

WiiWARE





LA-MULANA

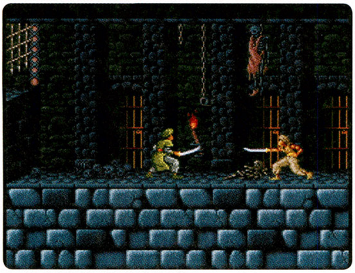
PUBLISHER: **ENJOYUP GAMES** GENRE: **ADVENTURE** PRICE: **1,000 POINTS**

Chris H.'s Pick

It's been years since La-Mulana was announced for WiiWare, and after delays, cancellations, publisher changes, and revivals, this nonlinear 2D platforming adventure is finally here. Was it worth the wait? Absolutely. La-Mulana is old-school to the core, harking back to the days of yore when players weren't held by the hand and guided by a flashing arrow to their next goal. On the contrary, this game is all about exploration and discovery, and the pure satisfaction of solving a puzzle or uncovering a secret elicits the same wondrous feeling that the original Legend of Zelda did back in its day. La-Mulana also scores big with charming retro graphics, an excellent soundtrack, polished controls, a vast arsenal of items and weapons, and a massive game world; the first area here is bigger than many entire WiiWare games! The flip side to all this is that La-Mulana is not for the easily frustrated. You'll curse when you don't know where to go; you'll suffer cheap deaths; you'll be forced to grind for money; you'll find yourself trapped with no option but to warp to a distant save point. But if you're looking for a well-made, classic-style, hardcore challenge, you'll bask in every minute of it. La-Mulana is easily one of the best WiiWare experiences available.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



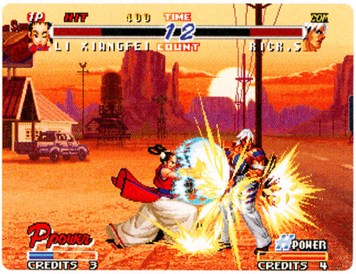
PRINCE OF PERSIA

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** ORIGINALLY RELEASED: **1992**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT/KONAMI** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** PRICE: **800 POINTS**

Of all the ports of the original Prince of Persia, the Super NES version is likely the grandest. In modern parlance, it's the remastered version, featuring greatly improved graphics and sound, revamped versions of the original levels, several brand-new stages, and training areas. The beautifully animated platforming action is (mostly) the same, of course; you'll spend your time jumping, dangling, swordfighting, and puzzle-solving, as always. (Also, your time limit is upped to two hours to handle the extra content.) An easy recommendation, particularly to those unfamiliar with this port. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



REAL BOUT FATAL FURY 2: THE NEWCOMERS

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO** ORIGINALLY RELEASED: **1998**
PUBLISHER: **D4 ENTERPRISE/SNK** GENRE: **FIGHTING** PRICE: **900 POINTS**

Real Bout Fatal Fury 2 doesn't alter the winning formula of its predecessor too much. The biggest change is the addition of the titular newcomers: boxer Rick Strowd and waitress/martial artist Li Xiangfei. On the gameplay front, instead of being able to hop between the foreground and the background on the battlefield, combatants fight on one plane and can "sway" out of harm's way at the press of a button. Everything else is as good as it was in the previous game, so check out either one. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE

Hamster Corporation has released two more no-frills grid-and-number-based puzzle games in the Nintendo eShop. In **Hitori by Nikoli** ($4.99), your goal is to eliminate excess numbers to avoid duplicates in each row or column; in **Heyawake by Nikoli** ($7.99) you must fill in a set number of blocks within each division. We're not sure why Heyawake carries a higher price than the other Nikoli games.... You can also test your brain power in **Academy: Chess Puzzles** (200 Points/$1.99) for DSiWare, which offers 750 challenging scenarios based on the classic board game.

COMIC HEROES

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To help you get ready for the release of Nintendo's new console, we've assembled everything you need to know in one handy-dandy guide. On the following pages, you'll find a full breakdown of the different hardware options, early impressions of every launch title, and our editors' top picks for what to buy come November 18. Prepare for launch!

GUIDE

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CHOOSE YOUR SET

WHEN YOU GO to pick up your Wii U console on November 18, you'll be able to choose which version of the system is right for you. Nintendo is releasing two different packages on that day—a Basic Set and a Deluxe Set. If you care mostly about style, your choice will likely be based on the system color. The Basic Set includes a white console and Wii U GamePad, whereas the Deluxe Set is in black. Beyond appearances, the Deluxe Set in the one to choose if you want to enjoy extra accessories and a copy of Nintendo Land. The Deluxe Set also features more internal memory, but don't forget that Wii U supports external USB storage. No matter which set you get, you will unwrap the same great hardware, including HD graphics and wireless connection to the Internet.

Nintendo
Nintendo Land
Wii U
DELUXE SET | 32GB
Wii U

Deluxe Set

$349.99 MSRP

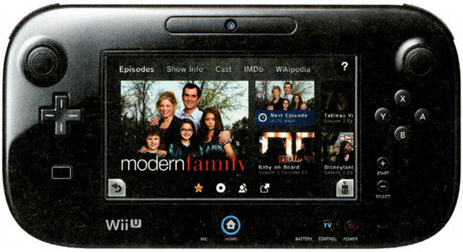
- Wii U console (black)
- Wii U GamePad (black)
- Sensor bar
- Nintendo Land game disc
- Digital Deluxe Promotion (earn discounts on eShop purchases)
- 32 GB internal memory for storage
- Wii U GamePad cradle
- Wii U GamePad stand
- Wii U console stand
- High-speed HDMI cable
- Wii U AC adapter
- Wii U GamePad AC adapter

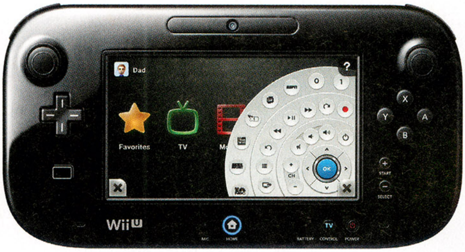
Nintendo
Wii U
BASIC SET | 8GB
Wii U

Basic Set

$299.99 MSRP

- Wii U console (white)
- Wii U GamePad (white)
- Sensor bar
- 8 GB internal memory for storage
- High-speed HDMI cable
- Sensor bar
- Wii U AC adapter
- Wii U GamePad AC adapter





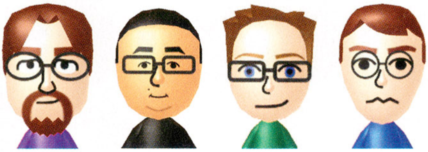
NINTENDO TVii

THE Wii U CONSOLE isn't only for games—thanks to Nintendo TVii, the system doubles as the ultimate entertainment portal for TV shows, movies, and sports. Available on every broadband-connected Wii U system at no extra charge, Nintendo TVii lets you access programming from Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon, your TiVo device, and live TV all from one convenient location (as long as you subscribe to such services). Individual profiles for up to 12 users enable you to keep track of your favorite programs and get recommendations based on your interests; there's even a family profile that gives suggestions for what the entire household might enjoy.

In addition to allowing you to view various forms of entertainment, Nintendo TVii broadens the experience by providing direct links to related content. Want to know more about an actor or a location in the show you're watching? Such info is only a click away. You can also comment on specially selected "TV Tag" moments for the top 100 TV shows, and easily share your opinions on the programs you're watching via Miiverse, Facebook, and Twitter. The possibilities are even greater for sports programming—you'll be able to catch highlight replays if you join a game late, and you can keep track of stats, plays, and the scores of other in-progress games on the screen of the Wii U GamePad. Speaking of the GamePad, a touch-enabled "super remote" on the controller's screen will enable you navigate menus and command your entertainment devices with ease.

MiiVERSE

HAVE YOU EVER FELT disconnected from the world when you're playing video games? Thanks to Miiverse, you'll never have to be alone again. This network-communication system allows players to connect with each other like never before. In the main Plaza area, players can check out what games, applications, and entertainment content others have recently experienced. Players can also challenge each other to matches and share tips and advice for their favorite games. Plus, the Miiverse is great for bragging to friends. After accomplishing a lofty goal, you can pause the game and post messages about your achievement to the Miiverse community.

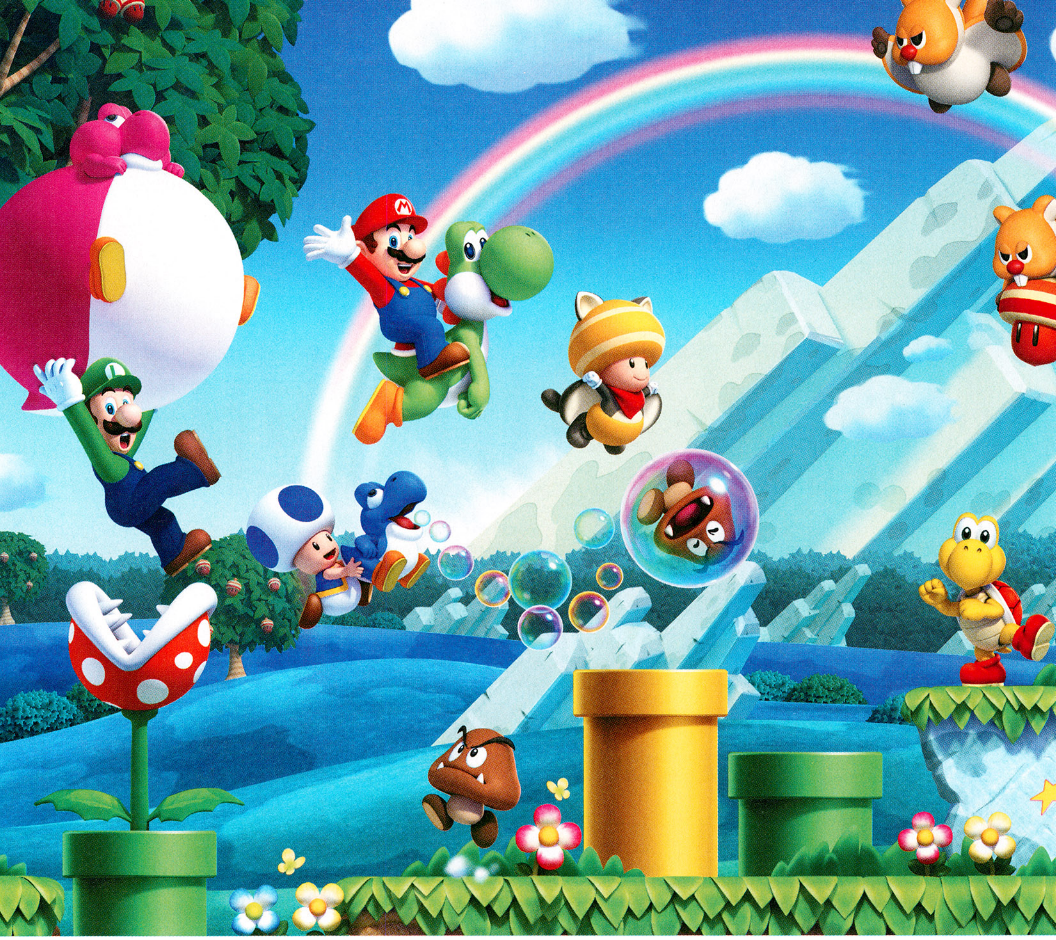


EVEN MORE FUN

Wii U WILL ALSO OFFER a variety of additional features, such as a web browser for surfing the 'Net from the comfort of your couch, and the Wii U iteration of the Nintendo eShop for purchasing a wide variety of downloadable software, including exclusive original titles and select full-size games (which will also be available at retail). Equally cool is the ability to engage in real-time video chat with other Wii U owners using the camera that's built into the Wii U GamePad.

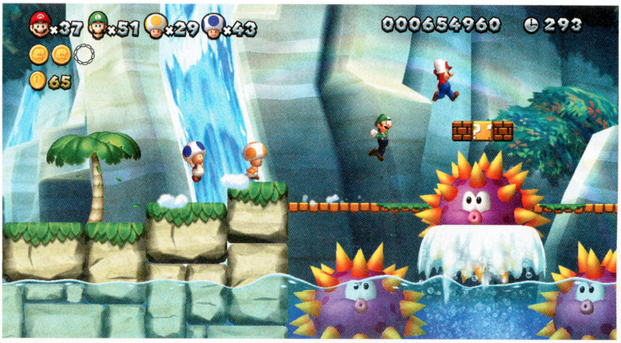
Wii U PRO CONTROLLER

CREATED WITH MULTIPLATFORM and multiplayer games in mind, the Wii U Pro controller is a more-traditional interface device for Wii U. Featuring a Control Pad, two analog Control Sticks, four main face buttons, four shoulder buttons, and more, the ergonomically designed wireless controller has proven quite comfortable in our early play sessions. It is available in both black and white, and will be on shelves alongside the system on Nov. 18 at a suggested price of $49.99.

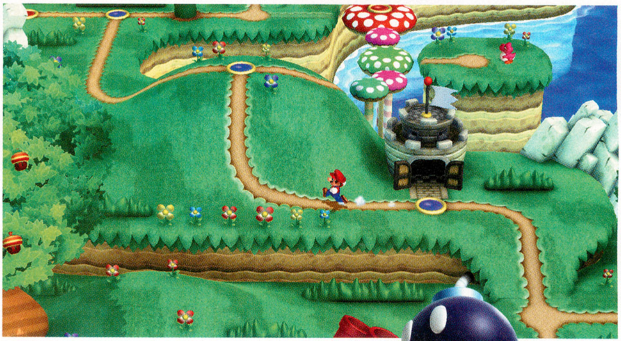


NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

World Born Anew



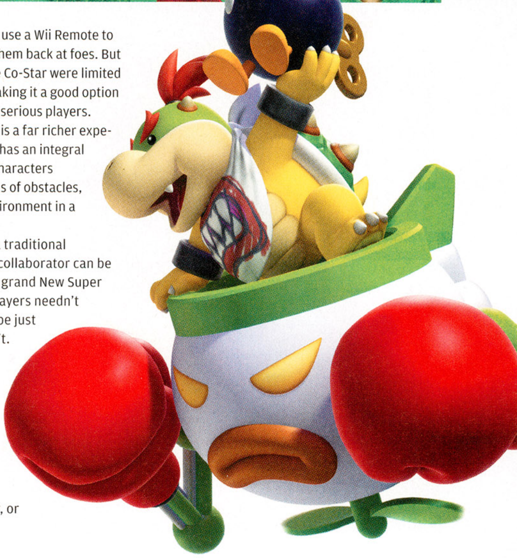
[Below] The simple dioramas of NSMB's past have given way to a more open map that's packed with attractions like wild Baby Yoshis and falling Power Acorns.

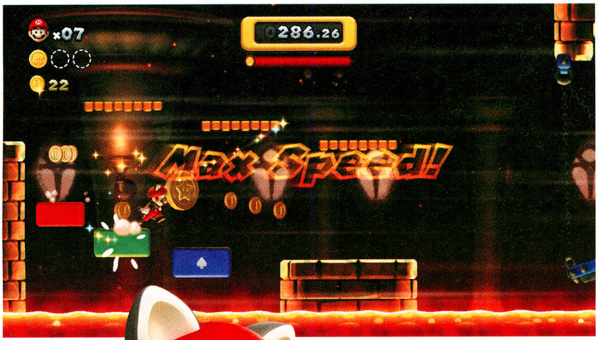


THE NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. franchise does a fine job of paying tribute to the spirit and mechanics of the early Mario games, though it hasn't always been great at justifying the "New" in its titles. But the Wii U console's touch-screen controller and online features have inspired a plethora of imaginative modes and challenges in New Super Mario Bros. U—just what the plumber ordered.

The most striking addition is Boost mode, in which one player uses the touch screen of the Wii U GamePad to support the up to four other people playing with Wii Remote controllers. The powers of the Boost-mode user include creating life-saving platforms with the tap of a finger, stunning foes, creating platform stairways to hidden treasures, and holding back deadly obstacles such as falling Thwomps. The concept is similar to the Co-Star mode of Super Mario Galaxy, in which a second player could use a Wii Remote to pick up Star Bits and shoot them back at foes. But the powers and duties of the Co-Star were limited and largely unnecessary, making it a good option for kids but a boring one for serious players. NSMBU's Boost-mode co-op is a far richer experience; the GamePad player has an integral and exciting role, catching characters when they fall, clearing paths of obstacles, and interacting with the environment in a variety of interesting ways.

The teamwork between a traditional player and his Boost-mode collaborator can be a beautiful thing. But in the grand New Super Mario Bros. Wii tradition, players needn't cooperate at all, and it can be just as much fun when they don't. A vengeful Boost-mode player can make life hell for the characters onscreen, throwing blocks in their path, directing enemies into their paths, and erasing the platforms beneath them. Respect your booster, or suffer the consequences.





At max Boost Rush speed, Mario's gonna have to run like Sonic to stay out of that lava.

MODES À LA MODE

The wide-ranging Challenges mode in New Super Mario Bros. U features five different sections, each packed with content. Players can test their skills at single-player time-attack levels, coin-collection races, 1-Up Rallies that sometimes involve Koopa-shell tricks and repeated Goomba jumps, Boost-mode challenges that require such perfect teamwork they aren't even beatable solo, and a set of miscellaneous special levels. Completing each challenge in a section unlocks the next one, and the deeper you go, the harder the challenges become. When you get one down pat, the game will save a replay video of your fancy footwork and display the collection of medals you won.

The trials of the Challenges mode make for intriguing snacks, but players in the mood for a substantial meal will find it in Boost Rush mode, the NSMBU equivalent of New Super Mario Bros. 2's Coin Rush mode. As in Coin Rush, Boost Rush players travel through a set of levels taken from the story mode, with a goal of clearing them as quickly as possible. But the levels now feature forced scrolling from left to right, and gathering coins doesn't affect your score—it instead hastens the pace at which the level scrolls. Speeding up the level allows you to complete it more quickly but sharply reduces the time you have to react to enemies and obstacles, making for a harrowing mix of risk and reward. The mode can be tackled with any combination of players, but was designed for at least one player controlling a character (you can even play as your Mii) and another assisting on the GamePad, supplying urgently needed platform placements and enemy distractions. There's even a Super Boost mode that gives the GamePad user the ability to fatally squash foes with a tap of their finger—but that player will need to be in perfect synch with the others to activate it, as it requires a character to jump on a series of Boost mode-created platforms in rapid succession.

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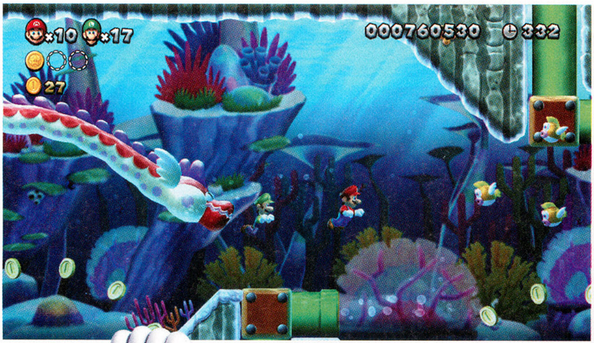
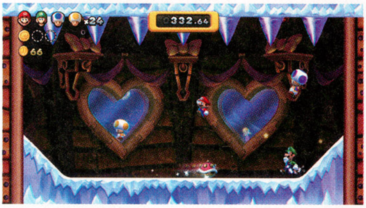
Bear witness to Bowser's newest dastardly kidnapping plan. Seems pretty airtight to us!





Can you spot the Mii in the background? They pop up from time to time to cheer players on in Challenges mode.

CUSTOM COIN BATTLES

The Coin Battle mode from New Super Mario Bros. Wii makes a triumphant return in New Super Mario Bros. U, with a very cool GamePad twist. As in the Wii version, this mode has up to four players competing to collect as many coins as possible. During gameplay, a player with a GamePad is free to use his Boost-mode tricks to help or impede his friends. But now, before the battle even begins, players can use the GamePad to fundamentally redesign the level by placing coins and Star Coins with the touch screen however they please. Whether you're experimenting with diabolically difficult coin placements or just narcissistically spelling your name in gold, you can save and edit your creation for a whole new coin battle experience.

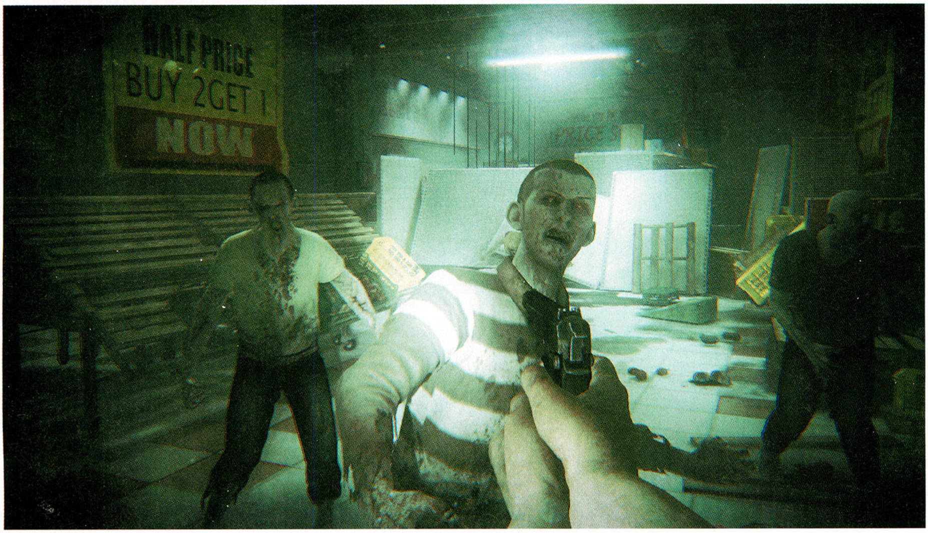
AND ONE OTHER THING...

There are so many new modes and features in New Super Mario Bros. U one could almost forget that there's an entire traditional Mario game in there as well. The story mode feels like a loving tribute to 1991's Super Mario World—which may be an intentional nod, as that was the last 2D Mario game to launch alongside a console. The coolest legacy from Super Mario World is the massive overworld map, in which all of the game's worlds are connected and players are free to plot their own route through them. In addition to the usual assortment of levels, towers, ghost houses, and airships, the map is packed with Toad Houses to visit, items to collect, baby Yoshis to capture, enemies to battle for power-up prizes, and more. And new things are popping up all the time; for example, a thieving creature known as Nabbit will show up in some already-completed levels, and if you choose to, you can pursue him in a high-speed chase to earn a valuable reward from Toad.

Baby Yoshis—another legacy of Super Mario World—make their long-awaited return in NSMBU. When carried by Mario, they still eat any enemy foolish enough to bump into their mouths, but eating no longer makes them grow into adult Yoshis. Instead, they each have a special baby power: Balloon Baby Yoshi can blow up like a hot-air balloon, lifting its carrier to reach higher points of the map. Bubble Baby Yoshi blows bubbles that can ensnare foes and turn them into a floating blister of coins. Glowing Baby Yoshi shines with a bright light when activated, illuminating a darkened room or stunning a nearby foe with its brilliance. (Full-grown Yoshis also return, playing just as they did in New Super Mario Bros. Wii.) Returning power-ups such as the Ice Flower and the Mini Mushroom from past NSMB games are joined by the Super Acorn, which transforms its user into a flying-squirrel form. As a flying squirrel, Mario, Luigi, and Toad can glide, do an additional hop in midair, and cling to walls.

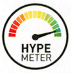
For all its new features, high-def graphics, and clever multiplayer modes, it's the giant story-mode overworld map—a feature that first appeared more than 20 years ago—that moved me the most. I'll never forget the joyous morning I dug into a brand-new copy of Super Mario World on the Super NES launch day, and now I can't imagine breaking in my Wii U GamePad with anything else. **—CASEY L.**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**



ZombiU

Breathing new life into the undead

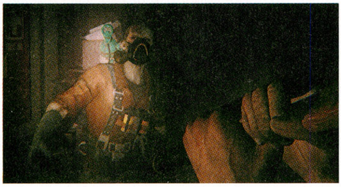


SINCE IT WAS FIRST revealed at this year's E3, ZombiU has been cynically compared by a portion of the gaming populace to Red Steel. This is silly. The only commonalities the games share is that they're both exclusive launch titles for a Nintendo console and published by Ubisoft. But whereas the critically panned Red Steel was developed by an unproven team in Paris, ZombiU comes from the acclaimed Ubisoft Montpellier studio and is helmed by two veterans whose previous works include the beloved Beyond Good & Evil and Rayman 2: The Great Escape. Plus, at no point leading up to its release did Red Steel seem all that promising. ZombiU, on the other hand, is one of our most eagerly anticipated launch titles for Wii U.

The game may even be the ultimate proof of concept for Nintendo's new console. The way it utilizes the Wii U GamePad brings so much to the table, delivering a harrowing survival-horror experience that just wouldn't be possible on any other platform. When you're searching through your backpack or trying to pick a lock on the GamePad screen while the television shows a horde of the undead shambling toward your position, the tension is unlike anything we've experienced in a game before. And the opportunity to deliver that new experience has emboldened the team to go all out when it comes to the other aspects of simulating a zombie apocalypse. The most notable example: one bite from the undead means your character is finished, forcing you to take control of a new survivor.

On top of the inventive single-player campaign is a unique and surprisingly addictive local multiplayer mode. It's like an amalgamation of first-person shooter and real-time strategy as one person uses the GamePad to dispatch his zombie minions while the other tries to mow them down via a Pro Controller.

Hopefully ZombiU lives up to its potential and becomes a huge hit, because we'd love to see how far the developers could take this without the inherent constraints of making a launch title. **—STEVE T.**



PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**
ESRB: **MATURE**

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD of a little game called Call of Duty: Black Ops II. The latest installment in Activision's chart-topping first-person shooter franchise is coming to Wii U on the console's launch day. Its single-player campaign features two connected storylines—one set in the 1970s and 1980s, and the other set in 2025. It's the first game in the series to feature branching storylines; in what the development team is calling Strike Force Missions, player choices will help determine the overall arc of the story and the fate of its characters. Along the way, you'll control unmanned drones, jet fighters, and even mechs.

Of course, a full assortment of multiplayer modes will be on offer as well, and this is where the Wii U version of Black Ops II has a major advantage over other platforms: local multiplayer. Two people in the same room can play the game together, with one using the television screen and the other utilizing the Wii U GamePad controller's touch screen (in the single-player campaign mode, you'll use the touchscreen to choose your loadout, and interactive maps will help guide you through missions). Multiteam matches can host three or more squads, and users can now create customized characters for deployment in multiplayer matches. Oh, and as in Treyarch's last two Call of Duty games, there'll be zombies, as well—there's even an undead-centered campaign in addition to the main story. **—EVAN S.**

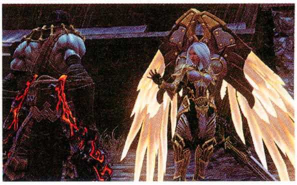
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **TREYARCH**
ESRB: **MATURE**

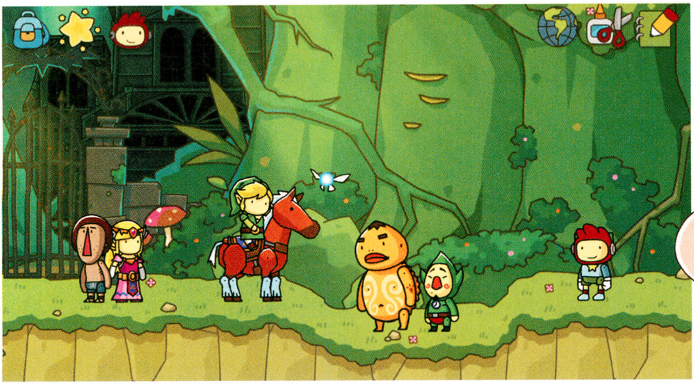
DARKSIDERS II

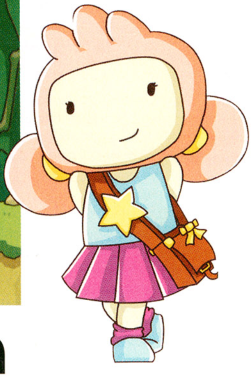
DEATH, one of the horsemen of the apocalypse, is on a mission to clear his brother War's name in the Mature-rated loot-based action-adventure title Darksiders II. Yes, the game was released earlier this year on non-Nintendo platforms, but what we've played so far indicates the Wii U edition is worth the wait. Not only does the game include more content on the disc—such as the Argul's Tomb quest and the preorder bonuses from GameStop and Best Buy, all of which were available only in downloadable form in the other versions—but this iteration of Darksiders II also makes good use of the Wii U GamePad controller. For example, you can change your equipment and employ the grim reaper's abilities via the touch screen. **—JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **VIGIL GAMES**
ESRB: **MATURE**

[Above] Don't like how Death's outfitted? You can use the touch screen to change his equipment.

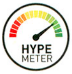






SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED

If you can imagine it, you can do it.

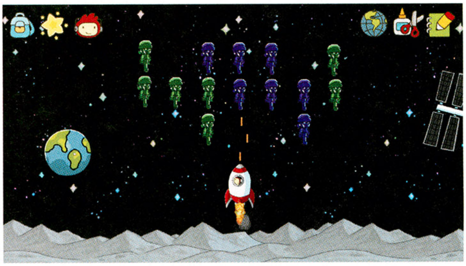


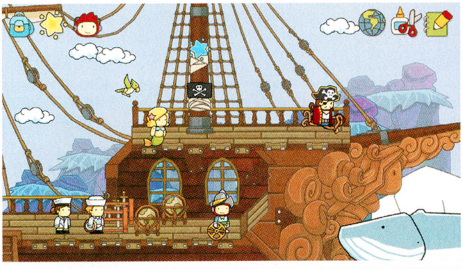
ADMIT IT—you've always wanted a zombie locomotive with polka-dot donuts for wheels and a peppermint heifer for a smokestack that spews delicious, flaming bowling balls when it moves. Luckily for you, that dream can become a reality thanks to Scribblenauts Unlimited's ridiculously deep custom-object editor. It's easy to spend hours upon hours combining objects, recoloring parts, and modifying behavioral patterns and AI routines to create whatever bizarre monstrosities your brain can come up with.

But that's only part of the appeal of Scribblenauts Unlimited. Like in previous series entries, you can create virtually anything by conjuring it from protagonist Maxwell's magic notebook—including Nintendo-themed bonus content exclusive to the Wii U version of the game, such as characters and items from the Mario and Legend of Zelda series! When you're not just creating stuff for fun, you'll use your powers to solve dozens of puzzling scenarios—helping a young man go on a successful date, for example, or rescuing hospital patients from various ailments.

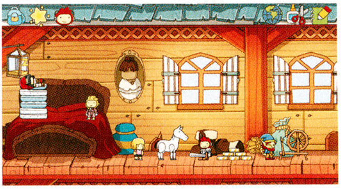
Naturally, the HD visuals make this far and away the best-looking Scribblenauts yet, and the title is a showcase for the Wii U GamePad. All the action unfolds on the controller's screen as well as on your TV, and the game takes full advantage of the touch screen by allowing you to type words, position objects, and interact with the nearly 40 environments. (You can also use the Control Pad, Control Sticks, and buttons for most actions if you'd prefer.) Our only concern is that, so far, the interface isn't quite as streamlined as we would like. —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**





[Above] Ahoy, mateys! There's booty to be found when Maxwell is around.



[Above] That looks like space and those appear to be some invaders. Good thing Maxwell is here to keep Earth safe!

SKYLANDERS GIANTS

We've already played the Wii version of Skylanders Giants, and if you couldn't tell from our review on page 78, we enjoyed the adventure quite a bit. This Wii U edition features many of the same basic elements as its Wii sibling, but the graphics are significantly sharper. —**JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: VICARIOUS VISIONS
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

ESPN SPORTS CONNECTION

A new take on casual, motion-controlled sports, ESPN Sports Connection lets you engage in six activities: baseball, soccer, football, tennis, golf, and go-karting. Our time with the game indicates that it's not quite the next Wii Sports, but it does use the Wii U GamePad in innovative ways. —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
ESRB: EVERYONE

HAPPY
PERFECT
JAZZY
GOOD
CRAZY
OK
FUNKY
GOOD

HAPPY
PERFECT
JAZZY
OK
CRAZY
PERFECT
FUNKY
GOOD

JUST DANCE 4

This latest entry in the popular music game series arrives on Wii U. Just Dance 4 includes 40 hit songs and a new Battle mode that allows players to challenge friends to a dance competition. Chaos is bound to ensue in Puppet Master mode, where one player uses the Wii U GamePad to change another player's dance moves in real time.—**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

SiNG PARTY

Why bother going out to a karaoke club when you can have even more fun at home? SiNG PARTY lets aspiring pop stars belt out a variety of tunes while getting backup from as many friends as you can cram in your living room. The singer uses the Wii U GamePad to view song lyrics, allowing him or her to freely move about the room. And if two vocalists want to put on a show, they can have their performances evaluated in real time on the television via Sing mode. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: FREESTYLEGAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

GAME PARTY CHAMPIONS

This fifth entry in the Game Party series features eight games, including Ping Pong, Skill Ball, Table Hockey, and Hoop Shot. Each of the activities take advantage of the Wii U GamePad, allowing players to get even closer to the action by tilting and turning the controller to affect the outcome. Up to four players can enjoy this party. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS.
DEVELOPER: PHOSPHOR GAMES
ESRB: EVERYONE

WARRIORS OROCHI 3 HYPER

The Dynasty Warriors and Samurai Warriors universes collide in this crossover title that has the two forces uniting to combat a deadly hydra (and a few thousand of its troops). This fast-paced hack-and-slash title features over 130 playable characters, customizable scenarios, and a new Duel mode. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: TECMO KOEI
DEVELOPER: KOEI
ESRB: RATING PENDING

MADDEN NFL 13

Using the GamePad to draw hot routes and more easily navigate your playbook is nice, but we're disappointed that Madden NFL 13 on Wii U is missing the new Infinity Engine physics introduced in other versions of the game earlier this year. Still, it's sure to be another solid game of pigskin from EA Sports. —**STEVE T.**

PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
DEVELOPER: EA TIBURON
ESRB: EVERYONE

NINTENDO LAND

Mario, Zelda, Metroid, and more—you'll find it all in Nintendo's virtual theme park.

NINTENDO LAND WILL probably be the first game that many players pop into their shiny new Wii U systems. It is, after all, included in the Wii U Deluxe Set, plus it's a showcase for the many creative ways that you'll be able to use the Wii U GamePad. There are 12 big attractions in all—some for single players, some for multiple players, and some for both—and each is inspired by a different classic Nintendo franchise, such as The Legend of Zelda, Donkey Kong, Super Mario, F-Zero, Animal Crossing, Metroid, or Luigi's Mansion. But no matter which you play, plenty of zany fun is likely to ensue. Here's a look at what you'll encounter when you step into Nintendo Land. —**CHRIS H. & STEVE T.**

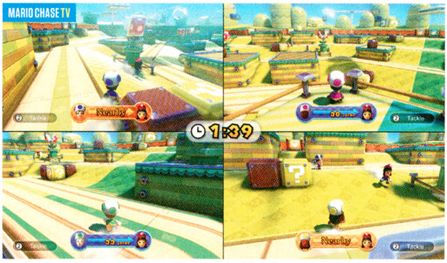
COMPETITIVE ATTRACTIONS

Three of the attractions are strictly multiplayer affairs and pit the person using the GamePad against as many as four opponents wielding Wii Remote controllers.

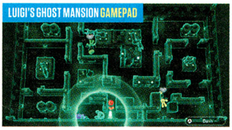
In Mario Chase, the GamePad player assumes the role of Nintendo's beloved mascot and tries to evade the other participants—dressed in Toad costumes—until time expires. An overhead map shows the location of Mario's pursuers on the GamePad while the other players are limited to a third-person view of the action on the television. It's therefore crucial that the Toad players coordinate their efforts by calling out the mustachioed one's last-known position and teaming up to surround him. Some of the courses make things a bit more interesting with unique terrain features, such as mud that slows players down and slides that allow them to cover a lot of ground in a hurry.

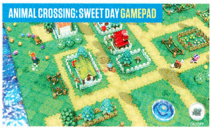
The other Mario brother also gets an attraction named after him: Luigi's Ghost Mansion. It puts the GamePad player in control of a mischievous apparition that everyone else attempts to hunt down in the labyrinthine rooms of a haunted estate. The ghost remains invisible on the TV screen until one of the hunters illuminates him with a flashlight, which drains the specter's life. For his part, the ghost can charge an ethereal attack that temporarily stuns his predators from afar or he can sneak up behind someone for a knockout blow. The other hunters may revive their fallen comrade, though doing so takes time and tends to leave them vulnerable. Luckily for them, the Wii Remote rumbles to offer warning when the ghost draws near. The hunters can win by siphoning all of the ghost's hit points before time expires. For the ghost to claim victory, he must render all of the other players unconscious.

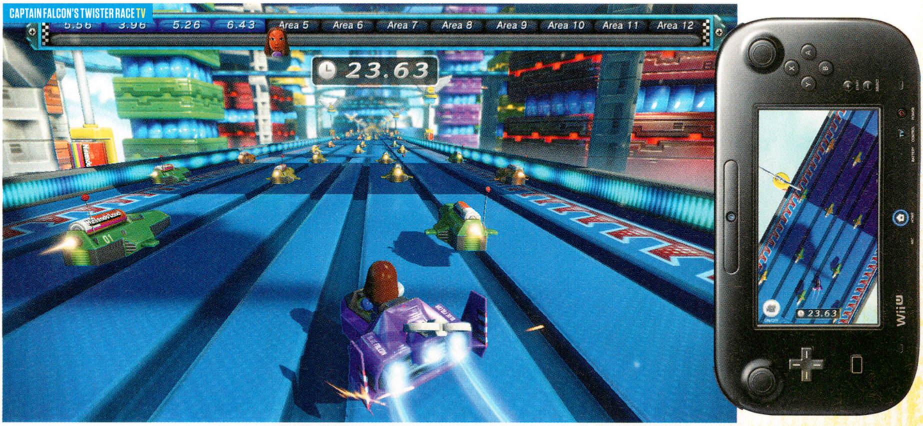
Animal Crossing: Sweet Day injects the typically peaceful franchise with a bit of sugar-fueled conflict. Using Wii Remotes, up to four players run through the stage and collect candy while the person using the GamePad attempts to stop them by commanding two guards—one with each Control Stick. While empty-handed, the sweet-toothed citizens are faster than the guards, but their speed takes a hit as they increase the size of their bounty. They can start dropping candy if the law is in hot pursuit, but in order to win, the collectors must accrue a set number of pieces before getting caught three times.


MARIO CHASE TV

[Above] Mario's spent years taking all the glory. Now it's the Toads chance!


LUIGI'S GHOST MANSION GAMEPAD


ANIMAL CROSSING: SWEET DAY GAMEPAD


CAPTAIN FALCON'S TWISTER RACE TV

SOLO ATTRACTIONS

When you don't have any friends nearby, Nintendo Land's six Solo Attractions offer plenty of single-player excitement.

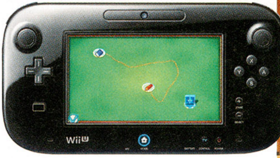
Captain Falcon's Twister Race, inspired by F-Zero, is a high-speed thrill ride down an obstacle-strewn course. You play by holding the GamePad upright and sideways, tilting it from side to side to steer your way onto boost pads and around hazards such as spikes, bumpers, cyclones, and mines. The GamePad screen displays the action as a top-down map, while the TV shows the action from a traditional third-person perspective.

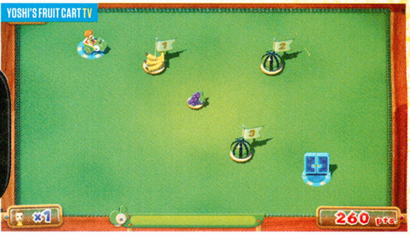
Yoshi's Fruit Cart also offers distinct viewing options on the GamePad and the TV screen. The concept is simple—you must draw a line to guide your Yoshi-shaped cart to each stage's exit, collecting fruit and avoiding traps along the way. However, while all the elements are shown on the TV screen, the GamePad displays only the cart and the exit, so you'll have to use keen observational skills to complete your goals. It's a surprisingly fun and challenging attraction, especially as more-complex elements are introduced.

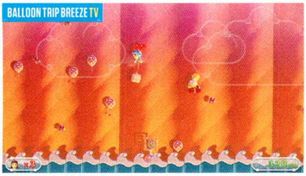
The relaxing Balloon Trip Breeze, based on the classic Balloon Fight, is much more traditional. You'll swipe the stylus across the touch screen to move through the air so you can collect balloons and avoid enemies in an attempt to earn a high score. You can also destroy foes and obstacles by tapping them on the touch screen.

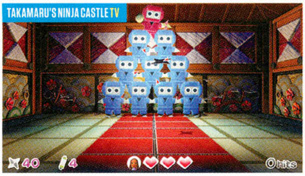
The other Solo Attractions are Donkey Kong's Crash Course, which requires you to tilt the GamePad from side to side to maneuver a fragile wheeled vehicle through a 2D rollercoasterlike maze; Takamaru's Ninja Castle, a first-person shooting gallery in which you'll slide your fingers across the GamePad screen to fling throwing stars at enemy ninjas; and Octopus Dance, a rhythm game inspired by a vintage Game & Watch title.

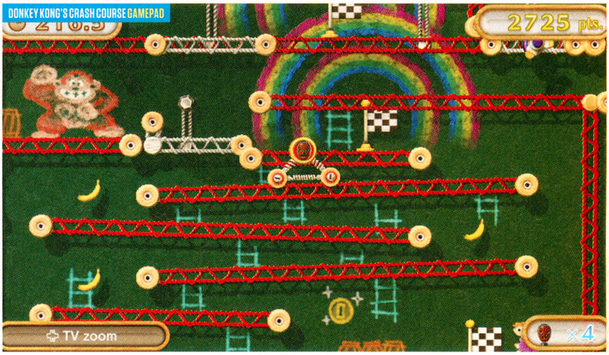
In Yoshi's Fruit Cart, the TV screen [right] reveals what the GamePad [below] does not.




YOSHI'S FRUIT CART TV


BALLOON TRIP BREEZE TV

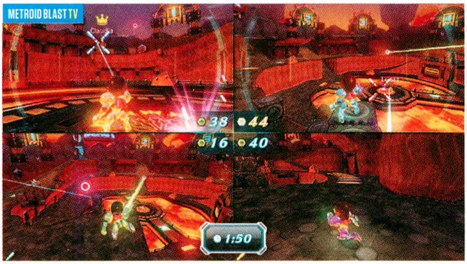

TAKAMARU'S NINJA CASTLE TV


DONKEY KONG'S CRASH COURSE GAMEPAD

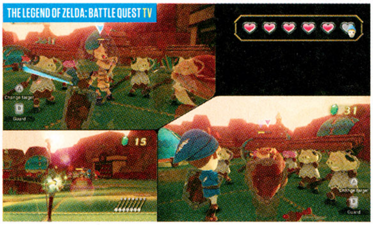
TEAM ATTRACTIONS

Team Attractions offer the best of both worlds, featuring multiple modes and a wealth of content for one to five players.

The Legend of Zelda: Battle Quest is an on-rails action game in which you and your friends fight your way through representations of Hyrule locales such as the Lost Woods and the road to the Goron Mines. Up to three players armed with Wii Remote Plus controllers act as swordsmen, using direction-specific swings to slice through enemy defenses. Meanwhile, a player with the GamePad functions as an archer, shooting switches, smashing objects, and sniping foes from afar with an innovative control scheme (aim by moving the GamePad, fire arrows by holding and releasing the right Control Stick). If you're alone, you can tackle Time Attack mode, which offers three missions of varying difficulty in which you'll try to defeat foes as fast as possible—or get overrun in the attempt.



[Above] Who is the greatest bounty hunter in the galaxy? Find out in Metroid Blast's Ground Battle.



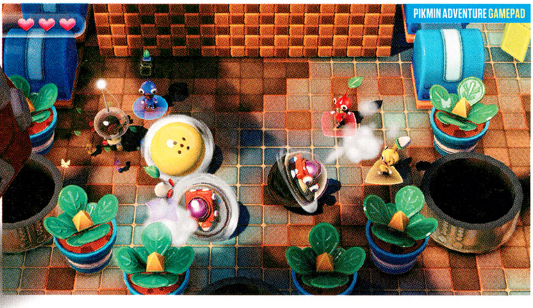
Fast-paced shooter Metroid Blast is probably the most traditional, gamer-oriented attraction in Nintendo Land. When you're controlling a character that's on foot, you'll move and shoot using the Wii Remote Plus and Nunchuk controllers. (Metroid Blast is the only attraction that requires the Nunchuk.) You'll also be able to zoom in for precision shots and execute advanced moves such as dodges, grapples, and charge attacks. Alternatively, you can take to the skies in a highly maneuverable personal gunship, using the GamePad to unleash missiles and gunfire on foes down below. Three modes are available in Metroid Blast: Assault Mission (in which one to five players battle waves of Metroid enemies, including Geemers, Zebesians, and even Ridley), Surface-Air Combat (a multiplayer contest in which the player in the gunship fights the players on foot), and Ground Battle (an on-foot free-for-all in which two to four players battle to collect tokens).

Pikmin Adventure just might be the sleeper sensation of Nintendo Land. Whereas the actual Pikmin games are all about strategy, Pikmin Adventure feels more like an actiony brawler. In Challenge mode, one player controls the leader (dressed like Captain Olimar) via the GamePad, while up to four additional players use Wii Remote controllers to guide characters garbed like Pikmin. Your mission is basically to smash everything in sight—be it a wall of blocks or a wind-up-toy enemy—and make it to the exit in each stage. Nectar and hammers will help you increase your strength, while bosses and occasional time limits keep the action interesting. But there are tactical considerations, too—sometimes all players must band together to activate a spring pad, for example. (Fortunately, the leader can summon everyone with a single button press.) In addition, Pikmin Adventure features a versus mode in which the player dressed as Olimar battles the players dressed as Pikmin.

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
RELEASE: EVERYONE 10+

ATTRACTION TOUR

Although all the Nintendo Land attractions can be played individually, you can also enjoy them in quick, bite-sized chunks in the multiplayer Attraction Tour mode. After choosing the difficulty and the number of rounds you wish to play, you'll take turns battling other players to achieve the highest score (or, in some cases, to simply survive), with the winner earning points and the loser hanging his head in shame. Meanwhile, players who aren't actively competing in a given round can try to earn extra points by guessing who will be the victor. Naturally, whoever has the most points when the final round ends is declared the winner.



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[Above] Ayane's twin blades have a shorter range than Ryu's katana, but excel at chaining quick combos.

NINJA GAIDEN 3: RAZOR'S EDGE

Reforged steel

AS AN ENHANCED version of a new game in a beloved series, Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge sounded like an easy win for developer Team Ninja. But enthusiasm for Razor's Edge has dulled since the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of Ninja Gaiden 3 launched to Metacritic scores in the 50s and widespread disapproval from fans. That left the studio with the much taller order of not just adding new features, but addressing the litany of complaints leveled against the core game.

Team Ninja seems to be off to a great start. The core gameplay of Razor's Edge is much improved, with the return of features like Ninja Gaiden 2's dismemberment system (in which maimed foes switch to potentially devastating suicide attacks), a reduction in the number of midbattle quick-time events that take control away from the player, and smarter enemies who seem more interested in fighting for their lives than lining up to be virtual bowling pins for your flashy combos. These changes have made the default difficulty significantly higher, and any enemy encounter can now be potentially fatal—a well-loved hallmark of the series. If the game still isn't tough enough for you, you can seek out the crystal skull hidden in each chapter; doing so will trigger an optional, ultratough Test of Valor, featuring waves of enemies led by a remixed version of a boss from a previous game in the series.

Much of the hate for Ninja Gaiden 3 came from the developer's puzzling decision to cut out any sense of character progression. The game shipped with no weapons besides hero Ryu's basic katana, and no way to upgrade him with new abilities. But Razor's Edge features a variety of different armaments—including claws, a scythe, and a staff—that can be acquired within the game's single-player campaign. There's also a Karma system that allows players to purchase weapon upgrades, new moves (such as the classic Flying Swallow and Guillotine Drop), and even alternate costumes. Much of the shop stock is unlocked by collecting Golden Scarabs that have been hidden throughout the campaign, adding a welcome touch of exploration to the game's otherwise-straightforward stages.

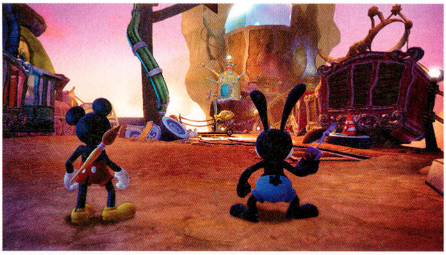
The most exciting new feature in Razor's Edge is the addition of Ayane—the busty young *kunoichi* from the Dead or Alive series and Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2—as a playable character. She has her own storyline that's interwoven with Ryu's, an appropriately zippy move set, a handful of exclusive levels, and a different list of items to purchase through the game's Karma system. She's also playable in the game's Ninja Trials co-op mode, and once the game is finished, either character can be chosen to play any campaign-mode level in the Chapter Challenge mode. Of course, since this is a Team Ninja game, her storyline involves plenty of disrobing, and there's even a new mechanic that allows you to shake the Wii U GamePad to jiggle her... uh... Yeah.

Fortunately, Team Ninja's obsession with boob physics hasn't distracted them from their mission of making Razor's Edge the game that Ninja Gaiden 3 should have been all along. While the game still has a faster, floatier, and more cinematic feel than some players will approve of, it certainly provides the full feature set and finely polished gameplay that fans had expected all along.

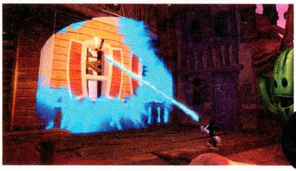
—CASEY L.

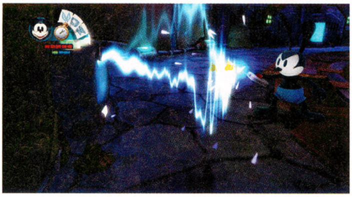
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **TEAM NINJA/TECMO KOEI**
ESRB: **MATURE**

DISNEY EPIC MICKEY 2: THE POWER OF TWO



[Below] If a walking, talking rabbit wielding an electricty-firing remote control isn't a sign of an impending apocalypse, we don't know what is.





THE FORGOTTEN WORLD of Wasteland is in trouble, and once again Mickey Mouse—armed with his magical paintbrush—is on a mission to save it. But this time players won't have to tackle the challenge alone; a second player can join in and take command of Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, who's equipped with a special remote control that can manipulate electricity. Together, the two cartoon heroes cooperatively explore Wasteland, solve puzzles, battle humongous bosses, and even witness characters who burst into song. As in the first Epic Mickey, your choices have an impact on the world—you can use paint to create and thinner to destroy—and you encounter many branching paths determined by your play style. As excited as we are for the Wii version of the game, the Wii U edition looks even better due to its high-def visuals and the ability for players to have their own screens; the one controlling Oswald can play on the TV using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers while the one controlling Mickey uses the screen on the Wii U GamePad. —**CHRIS H.**

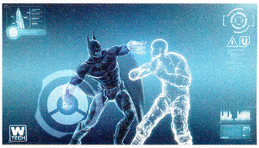
PUBLISHER: DISNEY INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: JUNCTION POINT
ESRB: EVERYONE

BATMAN:

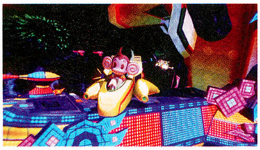
ARKHAM CITY—ARMORED EDITION

THIS UPGRADED VERSION of the hit open-world adventure takes place within the titular Arkham City, a walled-off section of Gotham City that acts as an oversized prison. When Batman is locked within the city's walls, he must face off against a group of his greatest foes, including Two-Face, the Penguin, Mr. Freeze, and the Joker. Despite the game's enjoyable fighting engine, there is a great emphasis on using stealth and Batman's variety of gadgets to take out the bad guys. The Wii U version contains new battle suits for Batman and Catwoman, which increase their strength and stealth abilities. Additionally, the Wii U GamePad allows players to maintain their inventory, upgrade their gear, and take greater control over their gadgets. —**PHIL T.**

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS.
DEVELOPER: WB GAMES MONTREAL
ESRB: TEEN



[Above] Batman's new battle suit enables him to enter a special B.A.T. mode once he's built up enough kinetic energy.



[Above] Why, yes, it appears to be a space carnival! C'mon, kids! Jump on Sky Lynx and let's go for a ride!

SONIC & ALL-STARS RACING TRANSFORMED

The stars of Sega are revving up their engines.

WITH SONIC & ALL-STARS Racing Transformed, Sega is poised to deliver everything that fans desire in a top-notch kart-racing game. More than 20 beloved characters? Check. Crazy weapons? Check. A plethora of interesting, well-designed courses? Check. Responsive controls and multiplayer action? Double check. This sequel to Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing might not reinvent the kart-racing genre, but the formula it follows is so polished it shines. (And don't worry; contrary to early online reports, the game zips along at an impressive frame rate.)

That's not to say that Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed doesn't offer anything new; if you've seen our previous coverage, then you already know that the game separates itself from the competition with the inclusion of transforming vehicles that allow you to race on land, sea, and air—and usually you'll do all three within a single race. Each vehicle form even has subtle handling differences that you'll want to master in order to become a true racing pro. The Wii U GamePad comes into play in innovative ways, too; if you hold it up, its screen acts as a rear-view mirror, and you can shake the GamePad to perform tricks in midair. In addition, up to five players can compete simultaneously—four via split-screen on the TV, and a fifth viewing the action on the GamePad. (If you're racing solo, you can play directly on the GamePad screen, as well.)

In addition to staples such as single races and Grand Prix mode (in which you'll speed through courses based on Sega franchises including Sonic the Hedgehog, Super Monkey Ball, Golden Axe, After Burner, NiGHTS, Skies of Arcadia, and Panzer Dragoon), the game features a World Tour mode. There you'll compete not only in standard races, but also in special contests such as drift challenges, boost challenges, and versus races (in which you must stay ahead of specific rivals for a set amount of time).

And if you're thinking of adding Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed to your Wii U library, you won't want to wait too long; initial copies of the game will be "bonus editions" containing additional on-disc content that will be available only via paid download in later shipments of the title. **—CHRIS H.**

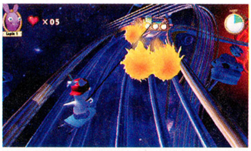
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

[Below] Who will win: dwarf or hedgehog? It's an epic showdown you'll see only in Sega & All-Stars Racing Transformed.

FIFA SOCCER 13

The bad news is that this version of FIFA 13 doesn't include all the upgrades that are in the FIFA 13 that the competing consoles got. The good news, however, is that this game builds upon the critically acclaimed FIFA 12 and takes advantage of most of the Wii U GamePad controller's features. —**JUSTIN C.**

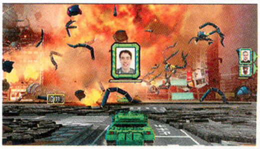
PUBLISHER: **EA SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**



RABBIDS LAND

Ubisoft's lunatic lagomorphs return for another round of multiplayer hijinks. This one takes place in a theme park and utilizes the various features of the Wii U GamePad for its new batch of minigames. Whether that's enough to reinvigorate this overexposed franchise remains to be seen. —**STEVE T.**

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT PARIS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**



TANK! TANK! TANK!

Designed for arcade-style pick-up-and-play chaos, Tank! Tank! Tank! lets you take control of (you guessed it) a tank so you can battle an onslaught of enemies—such as giant mechanical gorillas. Though the action isn't especially varied or deep, there are a lot of tanks to drive, and it does support up to four players. —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **RATING PENDING**

TRANSFORMERS PRIME

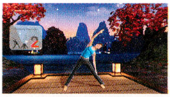
This action game based on the *Transformers Prime* TV show has you assuming the role of Autobots such as Optimus Prime and Bumblebee as you try to thwart Megatron and his Decepticon forces. In addition to the single-player game, there are a handful of multiplayer modes. —**JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **NOW PRODUCTION**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

WIPEOUT 3

Based on the *Wipeout* game show—and unfortunately not the futuristic hovercar-racing series—Wipeout 3 tasks you with surmounting a variety of over-the-top obstacles. Considering that we were less than excited for the Wii version, we're not expecting much from this one. —**JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **BEHAVIOUR INTERACTIVE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**



YOUR SHAPE: FITNESS EVOLVED 2013

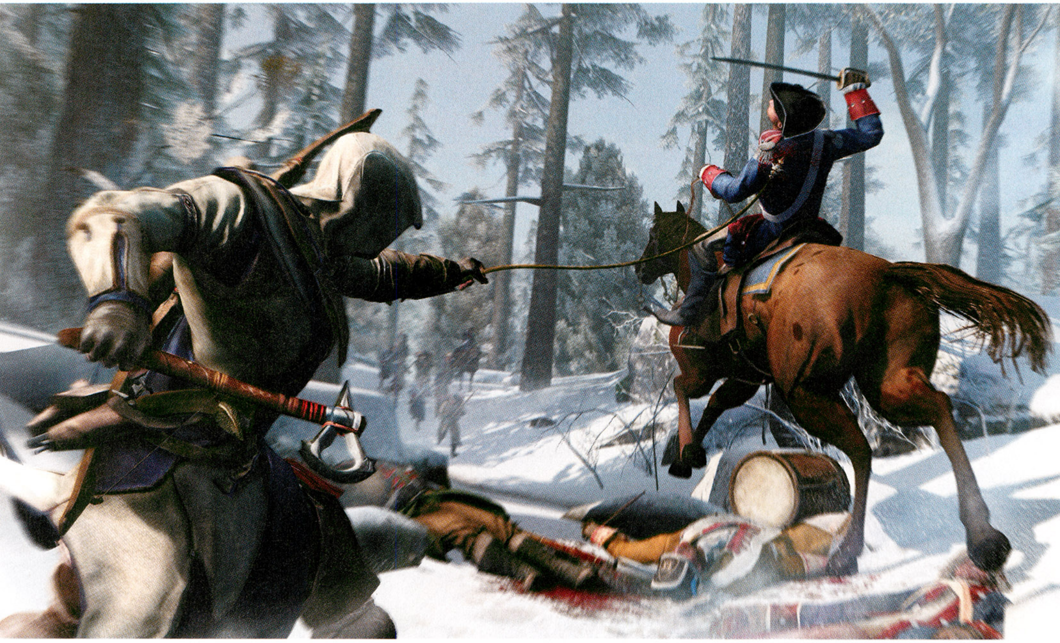
If you're looking for a workout and don't want to wait for Wii Fit U, Your Shape might do the trick. The title features 125 workouts, and you can set up personalized fitness routines to meet your goals. You'll also find healthy-eating suggestions and a calorie-burning dance mode. —**CHRIS H.**

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **BLUE BYTE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

NBA 2K13

The NBA 2K franchise threw up nothing but bricks on the Wii console, but its been consisently solid on other platforms. Fortunately, the big boy version of NBA 2K13 is coming to Wii U and it looks extremely promising based on what we've seen thus far. Plus, there's a cool biometric display that takes advantage of the Wii U GamePad. —**STEVE T.**

PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**



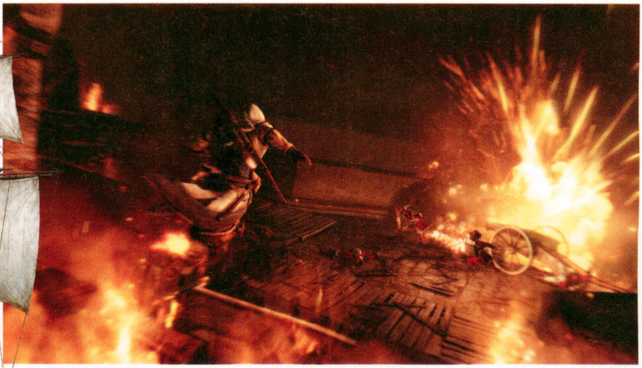
ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Who says history is boring?

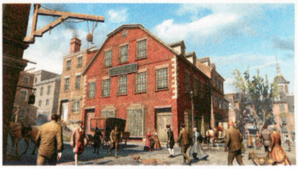
HYPE METER

SINCE ITS DEBUT IN 2007, Assassin's Creed has become one of Ubisoft's premier franchises—so it's exciting to see the mainline series finally make its way to a Nintendo platform. For those of you who might be unfamiliar with the story, here's a brief recap: the Assassins and the Templars are embroiled in a clandestine war, and a modern-day Assassin named Desmond Miles is reliving the lives of his predecessors through a virtual-reality machine called the Animus. Desmond's latest adventure has him experiencing the life of the half-Mohawk, half-English Connor Kenway (aka Ratonhnhaké:ton) during the American Revolution.

The game is broken up into chunks called sequences, and our demo covered the sixth one. It's 1773, and Connor and his mentor, Achilles Davenport, are visited by a Native American man named Kanen'tó:kon. He tells Connor that his people are being forced to sell their land to William Johnson, so Connor sets off on a quest to

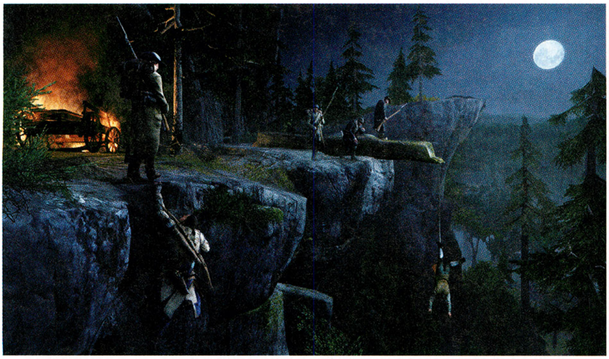


[Above] Stealth is usually your best option, but sometimes you have to make a statement.



get Johnson and the British government supporting him to back off. Before heading to the main mission objective in Boston, however, I decide to explore the surroundings of Achilles's residence, Davenport Homestead. (This is an open-world game, after all.) There's loads of stuff to do, including playing minigames (a board game similar to checkers, for example) and completing side quests called Homestead Missions. One such mission appears on the main road right outside Davenport's estate. An injured woman lies on the ground, and Connor carries her to Achilles. This woman, named Myriam, tells our hero she was wounded by poachers. Connor then heads off to where the culprits were last seen, climbing up trees in order to get a better vantage on the targets before taking them out with tools such as the rope dart, which Achilles gave Connor at the beginning of this sequence. (You select your tools and weapons by tapping their icons on the GamePad touch screen; additionally, the controller's display shows you a map of the area.) After eliminating all of the poachers and returning to Myriam, you unlock the grateful woman's fur-trading shop, which means you can now earn money by hunting animals and selling their pelts.

Boston is the ultimate destination at this point in the game, of course, so that's where I head next. In Beantown, Connor meets Sam Adams and completes missions for him, dispatching tax collectors and destroying tea crates (Johnson is in league with tea smugglers). After Connor proves himself, Sam tasks him with being the tip of the spear for the Boston Tea Party. Your objective is to take out the Redcoats guarding the ships that house the tea. Unfortunately, the soldiers are clustered close together, so playing stealthily is pretty much out of the question—as soon as one guard is killed, his buddies are alerted to your presence. The combat in the Assassin's Creed games emphasizes counterattacking, and this game sticks to that tradition. When you see a red triangle icon appear over an attacker's head, you tap the counter button. Time slows down for a second, giving you a brief window to

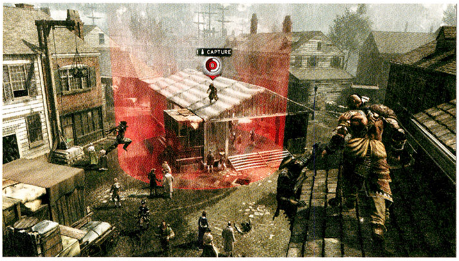


One of your Homestead Missions has you saving a craftsman from a group of bandits. If you manage to rescue him, he'll open up a woodworking shop near Davenport Homestead.

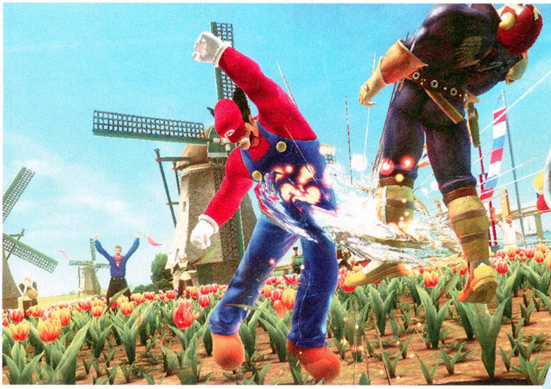
decide what to do with your adversary. You can slash your foe with a tomahawk, for instance, or you can throw him out of your way. Obviously, executing baddies is your best bet in most situations, but one of the optional objectives for this mission is to toss three soldiers off the ships and into the water. Speaking of chucking things into the drink, another optional objective is to pitch 10 crates of tea into Boston Harbor. It's fun to participate in a historical event such as the Boston Tea Party, but you have to keep in mind your main objective of protecting Paul Revere and William Molineux until 100 crates of tea have been dumped. Thinking that Johnson's revenue stream from the tea has been cut off, thus stopping him from purchasing Kanen'tó:kon's land, Connor returns to Davenport Homestead. Six months later, though, Johnson is once again trying to acquire the land, so Connor has to find a more *permanent* solution.

The single-player game is definitely enjoyable, but that's not all Assassin's Creed has on offer; there are also several online-multiplayer modes, such as Domination and Wolfpack. Domination is a four-on-four game in which teams compete for control of three zones on the map. If competition's not your thing, however, you might want to take a look at Wolfpack. In this mode, four players work together to eliminate AI-controlled targets within a short time limit. As you and your buddies assassinate enemies, your whole team earns scores based on performance. (Killing adversaries without them noticing you will give you a higher score than if they see you coming, for example.) Reach the score goal, and your team earns more time and unlocks the next sequence (there are 25 in all). Occasionally there are opportunities for synchronized assassinations, which is where cooperation really comes into play. Your buddies encounter a group of enemies, and each person hits the attack button at the same time, leading to a short cut-scene if the team coordinates successfully. **—JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
ESRB: MATURE



[Left] In the Domination multiplayer mode, you and your allies try to capture as many zones as possible.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2 Wii U EDITION

Namco Bandai opens the King of Iron Fist Tournament to everyone.

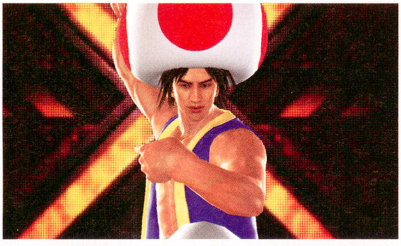
HYPE METER

AS IS THE CASE with many established fighting-game franchises, Tekken can intimidate newbies. But the team at Namco Bandai is taking strides to make things as accessible as possible with Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition.

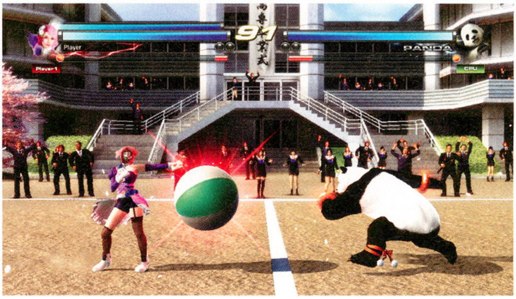
The basic controls aren't terribly complex: punches are mapped to X and Y, and kicks are assigned to A and B. In the eponymous tag matches, you tap R to swap characters. What can makes things difficult is executing moves that require combining commands. Fortunately, the developers have added touch-screen functionality to the game; you can assign moves to four touch-screen buttons on the Wii U GamePad controller (à la Tekken 3D Prime Edition for the Nintendo 3DS system). Only a single person benefits from this, however, as the game supports just one GamePad; the other folks use Classic Controllers or Wii U Pro Controllers. (Up to four people can play at one time in the Pair Play mode.) Of course, employing moves effectively is a more difficult hurdle to overcome. The story-driven Fight Lab mode provides assistance in that department, which presents an array of tutorials/challenges to help make you a better player.

Traditional one-on-one, two-on-one, and two-on-two contests aren't the only things Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition has on offer, though: there is also a pair of wacky minigames called Tekken Ball and Mushroom Battle. The former is a volleyball-style competition that was originally in Tekken 3 for PlayStation; the latter is an all-new mode in which combatants are affected by Mario-game power-ups such as Super Mushrooms, Mega Mushrooms, and Poison Mushrooms. If your character is wearing a Nintendo-themed outfit (Bryan Fury as Captain Falcon, for example, or Lei Wulong as Toad) while you're playing this or any other mode, all the better. **—JUSTIN C.**

PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **TEEN**



The roster includes a panda [right] and a guy that dresses up like Toad [above]. Clearly, this game takes itself very seriously.



COMING SOON

BEYOND THE 26 TITLES available on November 18, there are many more Wii U games planned for release within the console's "launch window," which extends until the end of March 2013. Here are some of the ones we're most looking forward to.

007 LEGENDS

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION \\ **DEVELOPER:** EUROCOM \\ **RELEASE:** DECEMBER 2012

3,440
150
POLICE

LEGO CITY: UNDERCOVER

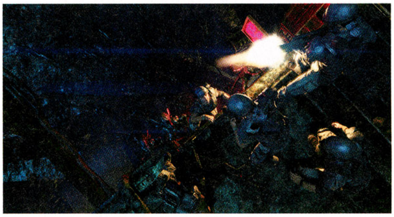
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO \\ **DEVELOPER:** TT GAMES \\ **RELEASE:** LAUNCH WINDOW

PIKMIN 3

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO \\ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO \\ **RELEASE:** LAUNCH WINDOW

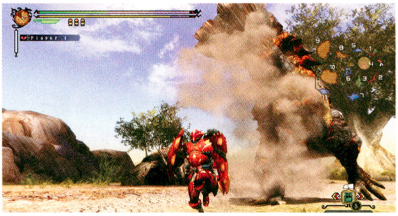
Wii FIT U

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO \\ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO \\ **RELEASE:** LAUNCH WINDOW



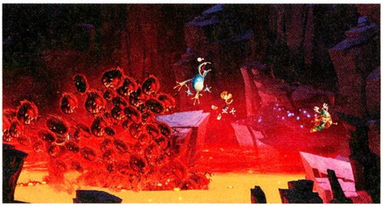
ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

PUBLISHER: SEGA \\ **DEVELOPER:** GEARBOX \\ **RELEASE:** Q1 2013



MONSTER HUNTER 3 ULTIMATE

PUBLISHER: CAPCOM \\ **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM \\ **RELEASE:** MARCH 2013



RAYMAN LEGENDS

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT \\ **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTPELLIER \\ **RELEASE:** Q1 2013

THE WONDERFUL 101

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO \\ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO \\ **RELEASE:** LAUNCH WINDOW

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EDITORS' PICKS

YOU'VE SEEN the hardware. You've seen the launch lineup. Now take a look at the Wii U games that the Nintendo Power editors are most looking forward to playing when the system hits on November 18.

STEVE T.

I'm excited for a lot of the launch titles, but ZombiU is far and away at the top of my list. Everything I've seen of the game has left me hugely impressed, and it's the kind of true survival-horror experience I've been craving since Resident Evil abandoned the genre. The other four games are all neck and neck, and Scribblenauts Unlimited isn't too far behind.

1. ZombiU
2. Assassin's Creed III
3. New Super Mario Bros. U
4. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
5. Call of Duty: Black Ops II

CHRIS H.

One of the things I'm most excited about regarding Wii U is finally getting to play major multiplatform franchises such as Assassin's Creed and Batman on a Nintendo system. But you also can't go wrong with Mario; I usually prefer the 3D Mario games to New SMB, but Mario's latest looks really fun. I feel bad not putting ZombiU on my list, but since first-person games aren't my forte, I think I'll just watch over Justin's shoulder when he plays.

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1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Assassin's Creed III
3. Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed
4. Batman: Arkham City—Armored Edition
5. Scribblenauts Unlimited

PHIL T.

I know the other guys will make fun of me for it, but dang it, I just can't resist Tecmo Koei's Warriors series. There's something extremely satisfying about slicing my way through hundreds of bad guys. I'm also excited to chill out and plow through Orochi's forces on the Wii U GamePad controller's screen.

1. New Super Mario Bros. U
2. Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed
3. Warriors Orochi 3 Hyper
4. Disney Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two
5. Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition

JUSTIN C.

In addition to Mario—which is obviously a must-buy—I'm really looking forward to Ubisoft's hardcore-gamer offerings. I've played a bit of both ZombiU and Assassin's Creed III already, and I couldn't be more excited about those titles. I'm also a huge Tekken fan, so I'll definitely be picking up Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition.

1. ZombiU
2. New Super Mario Bros. U
3. Assassin's Creed III
4. Tekken Tag Tournament 2 Wii U Edition
5. Call of Duty: Black Ops II

Nicole Smith

Nicole went back to basics and **saved $312!**

John Roberts

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The most HD channels	YES	NO	NO
Lowest All-Digital Prices Nationwide	YES	NO	NO
Award-Winning HD DVR	YES	NO	NO
FREE Installation in up to 6 rooms	YES	NO	NO

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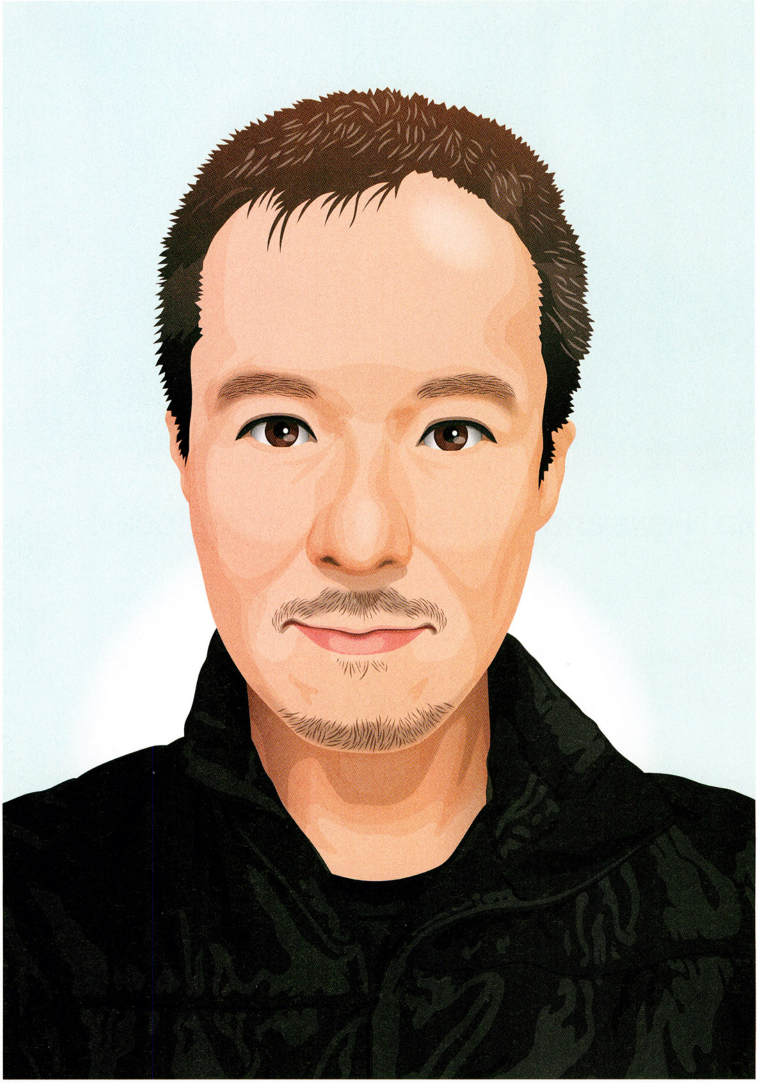
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
July 7, 19XX

BIRTHPLACE
Shizuoka, Japan

POSITION
Designer, Studio Saizensen Ltd., Game Division

BEST KNOWN FOR
Designing characters for (and cofounding) Treasure; being secretive

FAVORITE FOOD
Stir-fried vegetables and meat

CURRENT PROJECT
Code of Princess

Tetsuhiko "Han" Kikuchi

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

If you're a hardcore gamer, you're undoubtedly familiar with Japanese developer Treasure. Over the last two decades, the company has been responsible for beloved titles such as Gunstar Heroes, Guardian Heroes, Mischief Makers, and Sin & Punishment. Though he left the company in 2007, Treasure cofounder Tetsuhiko "Han" Kikuchi played a major part in forging the developer's trademark style; we recently caught up with him to learn more about his role on one of gaming's most respected teams.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you get into the video game business?
TETSUHIKO KIKUCHI
I've been in love with drawing and games since I was a child. Before I joined the gaming industry, I worked in a video game arcade, and after that, as an illustrator for a gaming magazine.

What types of games did you work on before you helped found Treasure?
For a short while, I worked in [Konami's] arcade-game production group.

As a character designer, what was important to you for making good character designs?
The most important things to consider in visual design, to me, are the silhouette, which technique to use, and that the design is favorably received by the player.

Are there any particular character designs that you've made that stand out to you as favorites?
The side characters in Gunstar Heroes and Guardian Heroes are my favorites.

It seems like Treasure was a pretty tight-knit group. What was it like to work there?
They were a lot of fun to work with. Everyone at that company loves video games.

Why do you go by the nickname Han?
It comes from arcade-game name-entry screens, which usually allow only three letters. I picked the name...partly because it's the reading for my favorite kanji, which means "manly man."

What inspired the creation of the original Guardian Heroes?
I was influenced by Aliens vs. Predator (a Capcom arcade title) and Mad Stalker for the X68000 computer. I was in love with pen-and-paper RPGs back then, and I used the characters in my game as the main characters for Guardian Heroes.

What was the genesis of Guardian Heroes's three-plane gameplay?
It might have been Fatal Fury's line system. I was also thinking about the way 2D action platformers use height to evade enemy attacks, and wanted to do something along those lines, but using depth.

Why did you leave Treasure?
For personal reasons. I still respect Treasure and it was an honor to be part of them.

What brought you back to the hack-and-slash genre with Code of Princess?
Other people at the company suddenly felt like making this kind of game, and the idea caught on, so more people got excited and fueled Code of Princess's production.

What do you hope players notice when it comes to the enemy designs and character movement in Code of Princess?
I would be honored if the players enjoy the comical, detailed, exaggerated animations for my characters.

Are there things you wished you could have achieved with Guardian Heroes that you were finally able to realize with Code of Princess?
We didn't have co-op and versus play over the Internet back then, so I'm very happy to see it realized in Code of Princess.

What are your thoughts on the state of game development and the gaming market in Japan?
This doesn't just apply to Japanese developers, but I'm always impressed by my fellow game creators—all over the world—who struggle through difficult conditions to realize their dreams.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
I believe both the creators and players have become more organized and strategic. The prevalence of the Internet has also been a big change.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
My greatest joy is in planning the basic rules of the game, and then seeing them realized. Also, this may sound simple, but I enjoy animating characters.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
Set a goal which you can't yield from or compromise on, get there, and then go back to deal with side problems that come up along the way. That's my ideal way of handling tough situations.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
I respect all the creators, whether they're friends of mine or not, who are in it for the joy of gaming and fun for the players. Regardless of genre, I believe you can see the love in games made by people like that.

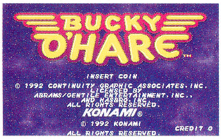
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I greatly respect anything in any entertainment medium that respects the audience.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
My current—and biggest—hobby is taking care of my two-year-old son.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I'd like the ability to read the mind of anything I interact with. Not just humans, either—anything.

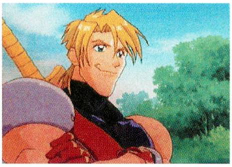
GAMEOGRAPHY

Action and shooting games seem to be Kikuchi's fortes—he's contributed to some of the best.



BUCKY O'HARE
1992, ARCADE
ENEMY CHARACTER DESIGNER

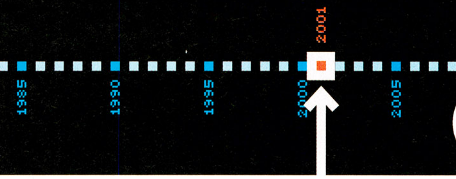
GUNSTAR HEROES
1993, SEGA GENESIS
CHARACTER CREATOR



GUARDIAN HEROES
1996, SEGA SATURN
CHARACTER DESIGN, ACTION DIRECTOR, CREATION DIRECTOR

Sister Hel
Oh, my, the Princess!

CODE OF PRINCESS
2012, NINTENDO 3DS
ORIGINAL PLANNING, ENEMY CHARACTER DESIGN, MOTION DIRECTOR

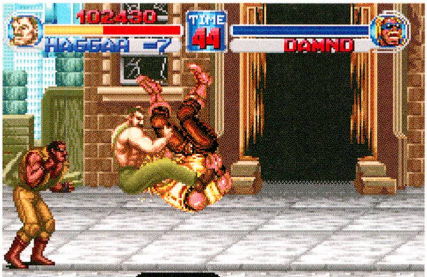


I'm gonna balance the budget...with your spleen!

Final Fight One

It's time to piledrive some punks!

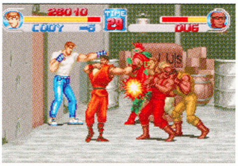
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY ADVANCE**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE DATE: **SEPTEMBER 2001**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **143, 148, 152**
ENEMIES NAMED AFTER GUNS N' ROSES MEMBERS: **2**



If your city's mayor isn't visiting the slums and smashing a gang leader into the pavement, clearly he isn't doing his job properly.

Every politician talks about fighting crime, but pro-wrestler-turned-mayor Mike Haggar does it literally: by taking to the streets and punching evildoers in the face. Aided by his friends Guy and Cody, Haggar will stop at nothing to obliterate the Mad Gear gang and rescue his daughter Jessica from their vile clutches. Such was the premise of the arcade smash Final Fight, which arrived on Game Boy Advance as Final Fight One.

Offering the same fist-flying fun as its coin-op cousin, Final Fight One came complete with attractive hand-drawn visuals, a rockin' soundtrack, co-op action, three playable characters, six stages (plus bonus rounds), and a diverse array of attacks. It also provided the ability to use a muscle-bound mayor to grab a thug, leap into the air, and come crashing down on a group of punks with a devastating piledriver. If there's anything in gaming more awesome than that, we have yet to see it.

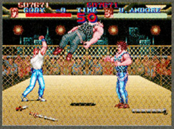


But it was with subtle details that the game truly left its mark on the beat-'em-up genre. The physical interaction between characters was especially satisfying; the way enemies reacted to attacks made it feel like there was weight behind every punch and slam, and the ability to combo from melee attacks into throws was ridiculously fulfilling. In addition, the game warded off repetition by including a wide variety of pickups (for both bonus points and health restoration) and a diverse selection of distinctive enemies; rather than being simple palette swaps of one another, bad guys had individual names and faces.

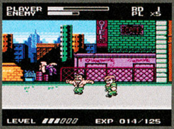
When it originally hit arcades, Final Fight was so influential that any similar game that followed was referred to as a "Final Fight clone." It set the standard for side-scrolling brawlers, and its heroes went on to star in games such as Super Street Fighter IV. Final Fight One didn't have as much of an impact, but it did deliver a fantastic arcade conversion and even added new features such as extra cut-scenes and alternate versions of the playable characters. If you're cruisin' for a bruisin', look no further than Final Fight One. —**CHRIS H.**

THE FIGHT GOES ON

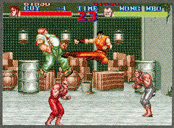
Final Fight One is the best version of Final Fight to appear on a Nintendo system, but it isn't the only one. Here are the other ways to get your fight on.



FINAL FIGHT (1991)
This Super NES launch title provided plenty of exciting action, but it lacked several features, including one of the levels (the Industrial Area), one of the characters (Guy), and a co-op mode.



MIGHTY FINAL FIGHT (1993)
Released for the NES, Mighty Final Fight was a goofy pseudoparody of Final Fight featuring superdeformed characters. This game was later released on GBA as part of Capcom Classics Mini-Mix.



FINAL FIGHT GUY (1994)
Available only at Blockbuster, this modified version of the Super NES game revived Guy as a playable character. Cut-scenes and power-ups were also changed.

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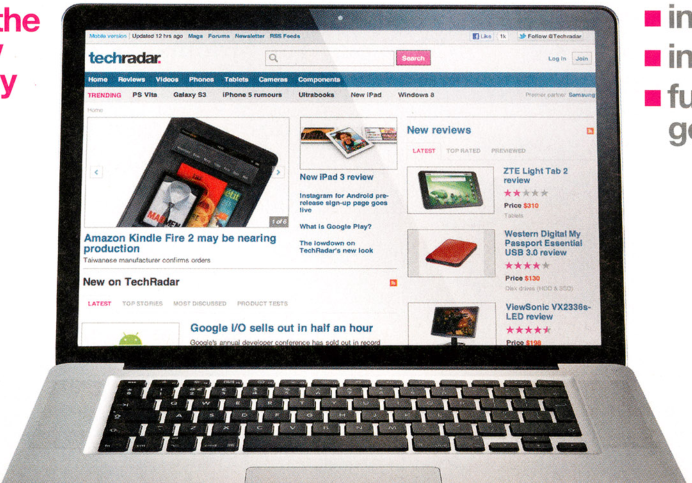
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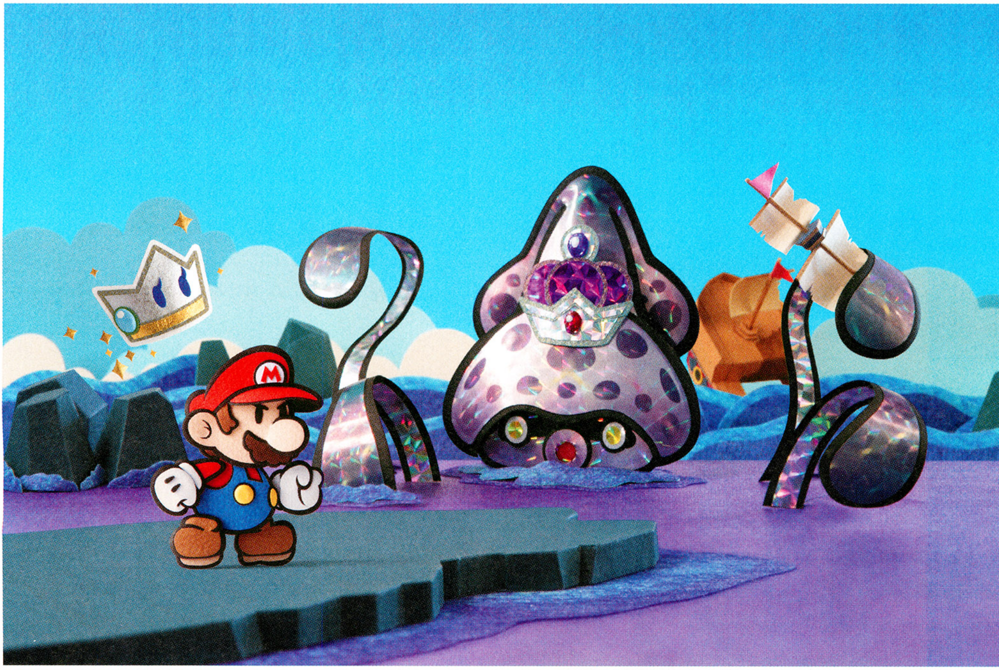
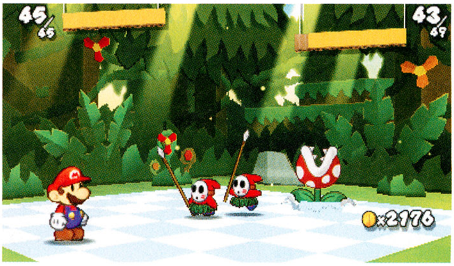
BOWSER
BOWSER

This month's reviews are headlined by Paper Mario: Sticker Star. Does the holiday season's most anticipated Nintendo 3DS title fall flat or put the hammer down on boredom? Turn the page to find out!





Back in the Fold

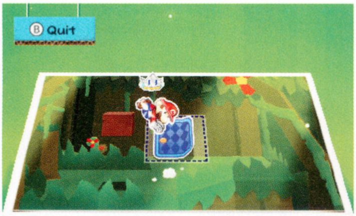
PAPER MARIO: STICKER STAR

8.0

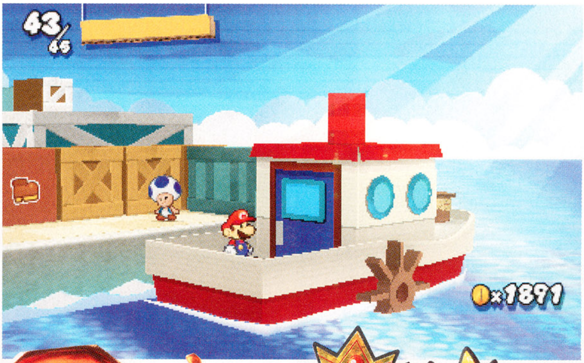
Mario will always be known for his platforming exploits first and foremost, but he's also assembled an impressive body of work in the role-playing genre. As a matter of fact, Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga and Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door rank among this reviewer's all-time favorite games starring the mustachioed icon. His latest such venture is Paper Mario: Sticker Star, and though it doesn't quite reach the rarefied heights of those two gems, it's certainly a worthy addition to the character's pantheon of great RPGs.

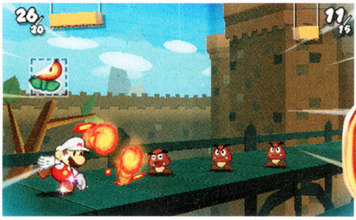
Our tale begins on the night of Sticker Fest, an annual celebration during which the citizens of Decalburg gather to wish upon the Sticker Comet. As he is wont to do, Bowser shows up and puts a damper on the festivities by trying to snag the sparkly space debris and secure its wish-granting powers for himself. His attempt causes an explosion, however, scattering the comet's pieces throughout the kingdom. One especially potent sticker in the form of a crown lands on the Koopa King's head and transforms him into a dazzling decal of unparalleled might. Of course, the first thing he does with his newfound strength is to kidnap Princess Peach before making a swift getaway. Now it's up to Mario to scour the kingdom for the other crown stickers so he can combat his newly ensparkled nemesis and rescue the princess.

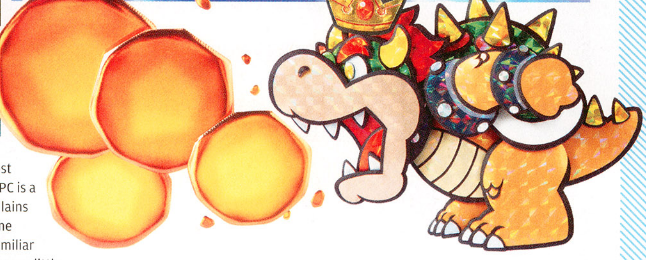
Stickers are the driving force behind not only the narrative, but also the gameplay. You'll find them scattered all throughout the environment and available for purchase in shops. Your adhesive goodies are stored in an album on the Nintendo 3DS system's bottom screen, and when it comes time to do battle, they serve as Mario's commands. Whether you want to execute a jump attack, stun enemies with a POW Block, or restore your hit points with a mushroom, you'll need to use the corresponding decal. There are dozens of different stickers in the game, though your album can



[Above] Mario's "paperize" ability allows him to manipulate his surroundings by, for example, applying special stickers.







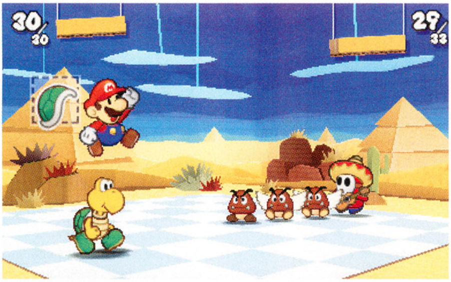
hold only so many at once, which adds a nice element of strategy to Paper Mario's already-stellar battle system. Like previous games in the franchise, this one offers turn-based combat that moves briskly and keeps you on your toes with bonuses for timed button presses on both offense and defense. It's a bit disappointing, however, that Mario fights solo for the entirety of the quest. There are no partner characters as there have been in prior Paper Mario installments, and the battle system feels a bit less dynamic as a result.

A dearth of characters is probably Sticker Star's biggest (and most surprising) shortfall, in fact. It's not just the lack of playable allies; Mario doesn't encounter many noteworthy personalities of any stripe. Almost every friendly NPC is a Toad, and the villains are typically some variation on a familiar enemy type with very little to say. That's a huge departure from Mario's previous role-playing adventures, which gave us such memorable characters as Fawful, Rawk Hawk, and Count Bleck. The barebones cast makes for some pretty thin storytelling and severely limits the opportunities for comedy—a Mario RPG trademark. There are still plenty of humorous touches, and the localization team led by Nate Bihldorff has once more done a fantastic job with what writing is there, but Sticker Star just doesn't have as much personality as its predecessors.

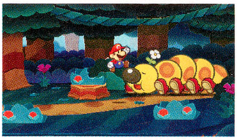
To be fair, though, that's probably a criticism born of high expectations. Taken on its own, this is a creative, entertaining, and delightfully goofy offering. The paper motif is more brilliantly realized than ever before; not only is every character made of paper, but so is the environment. That's played up in all sorts of amusing ways throughout, not the least of which is when Mario runs into a "real-world" object like a fan or a pair of scissors that wreaks havoc with his surroundings. The motif also lends the game a unique aesthetic that works especially well with stereoscopic 3D. All told, this is one of the best-looking titles on the N3DS, and the jazzy soundtrack is a winner, to boot.

Ostensibly because Sticker Star is the first Paper Mario designed for a handheld system, the world map is divided into levels that allow you to enjoy the game in relatively quick, bite-sized chunks. That does limit the overall sense of exploration somewhat, but there are tons of hidden secrets to discover in each locale, and you're free to move back and forth between any of the levels you've already completed (which is actually required on a few occasions). So it still feels like an RPG. Plus, the level designs can be quite clever and boast incredible variety. One has you participating in a game show, for instance, and another takes place almost entirely on a ski lift.

Though I may not have laughed quite as much or found myself as deeply engaged in the story as I did with Mario's past role-playing efforts, I had a great time with Paper Mario: Sticker Star. And it's an especially welcome addition to a library mostly starved for quality RPGs. **—STEVE T.**



Why yes, that Shy Guy *is* wearing a sombrero and playing a mariachi guitar.



N3DS
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT VIDEO GAME FRANCHISE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE GET AN ACTION-FIGURE LINE?

JUSTIN CHENG

Most of my favorite franchises have action figures already, so I'm going to go with Shenmue. Sure, the toys themselves would probably be pretty boring, but I'm a sucker for anything related to that series.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Phoenix Wright and Miles Edgeworth with finger-pointing action! Also, as you can tell from this month's Playback, I'm a big Final Fight fan. I need an official Mike Haggar figure!

CODY MARTIN

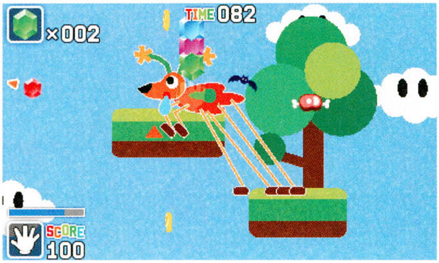
I know that a few of the individual characters have their own lines of action figures, but I think it'd be cool to see a Super Smash Bros. series.

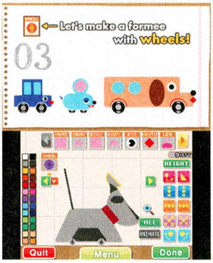
PHIL THEOBALD

I suppose saying the upcoming Transformers Prime game would be cheating, so I'm gonna go with retro-licious indie games like VVVVVV, Cave Story, and Mutant Mudds.

STEVE THOMASON

Since we've already seen some pretty great figures for Final Fantasy and Zelda, I'll go a bit obscure and say the classic RPG series Lunar. I'd kill to have a little plastic Ghaleon on my desk.





Freaks and Geeks

FREAKYFORMS DELUXE: YOUR CREATIONS, ALIVE!

6.0

Like the original Freakyforms that hit the eShop last year, the main draw of this deluxe version is the extensive character-creation tool. Using simple shapes to assemble all sorts of wild creatures is a ton of fun. The ability to share your work via QR codes is great, too. Unfortunately, the actual game in which you use your creations isn't that great. It's a bland platformer filled with repetitive tasks. Freakyforms Deluxe adds dungeons, but they're not much more exciting than the main worlds. There are also occasional glitches when a custom character can't figure out how to navigate the environment (for example, as you lead it up a hill, one of its legs decides it wants to stretch and walk through an underground tunnel). These faults were easier to ignore in the $7 eShop title because the creative aspect is so enjoyable, but as a full retail release, they become less tolerable. **—PHIL T.**

Tip-Top attacks!

Aggressive
Speedy
HP

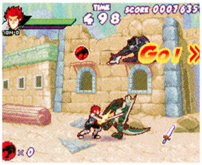
N3DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ASOBISM**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

ThunderCats, No!

THUNDERCATS

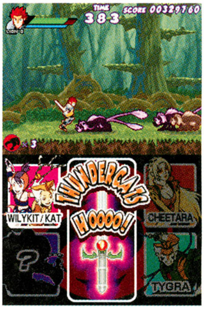
4.0

It's pretty surprising that it has taken more than 25 years—and two cartoon series—for someone to make a game based on *ThunderCats*. After all, its tale of cat-human hybrids using a magical sword to battle an evil mummy seems like perfect video game fodder.



Unfortunately, the ThunderCats game we finally got is an incredibly simple side-scrolling romp through boring levels populated by similar-looking enemies. Its gameplay boils down to jumping, slashing, and powering up a special attack. What's more, all of the 'Cats apart from Lion-O make only brief, unplayable cameos. It's not challenging so much as it is frustrating; even the dull boss battles exist seemingly just to prolong the brief adventure.

About the only things ThunderCats almost gets right are its sights and sounds, though you might want to mute your handheld after you've heard "ThunderCats, ho!" for the 20th time. **—RANDY N.**

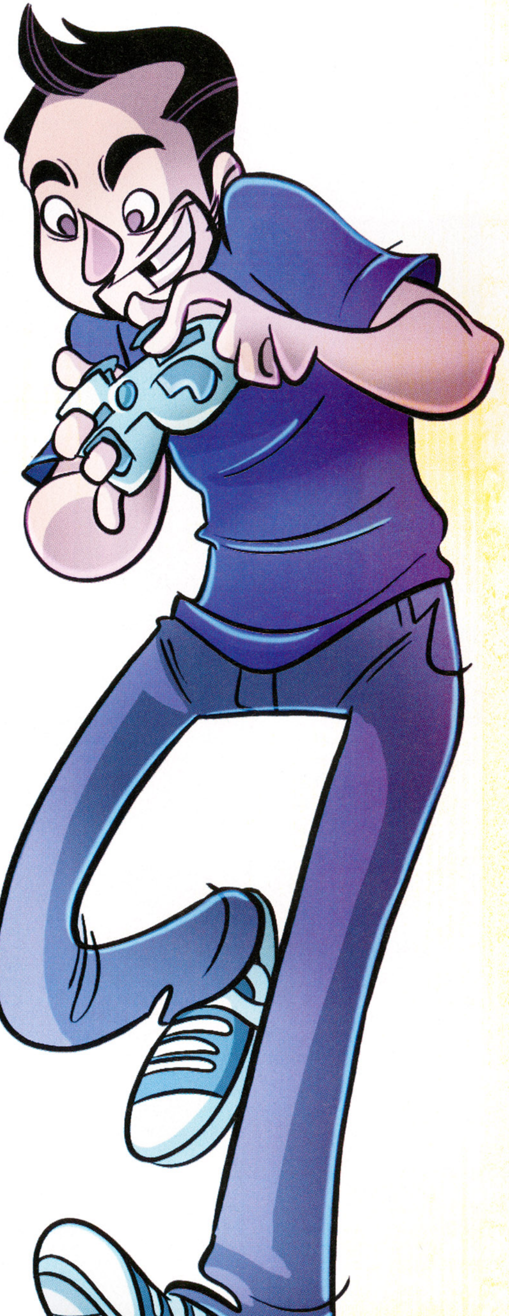


DS PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **ASPECT DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

You might know **Joshua**. He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have **big black letters on the box** to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

Los Angeles, CA



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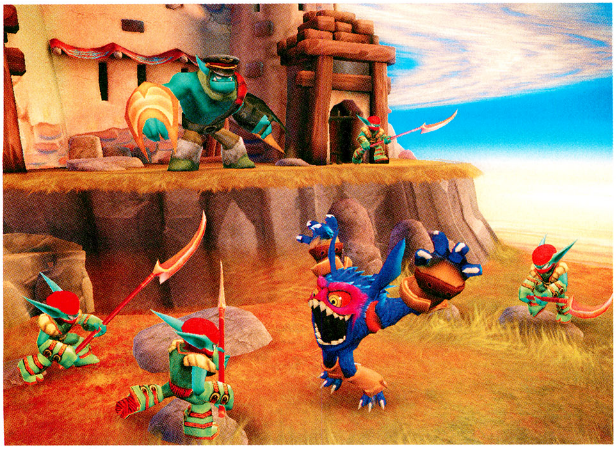
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



Big Fun

SKYLANDERS GIANTS

8.0

Hopefully you've played Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure before you jump into Skylanders Giants. There isn't much in the way of introductions to characters such as Flynn and Cali, and the game itself picks up where the last one left off: main antagonist Kaos, who was banished to our world, makes his way back to Skylands and wreaks havoc with the help of ancient robots called Arkeyans. To put a stop to this menace, you'll need help from the big (literally) new addition to the franchise, the Giants. These large lugs don't fundamentally change the Diablo-style gameplay—they are employed in essentially the same manner as other Skylanders, granting you access to otherwise-unreachable areas—but it feels gratifying to use the gargantuan fellas to demolish enemies and objects.

In addition to the Giants, features such as the Skystones minigame and puzzles you have to solve to unlock certain doors help prevent the game from becoming too repetitive. Obviously, the new toys spice things up, too. With 8 Giants, 8 new regular-size Skylanders, and 24 updated versions of previously released characters, Skylanders Giants can seem like quite an investment. But I already plan on purchasing most if not all of the figurines, both because they'll be useful in the game and because the toys are pretty darn neat in their own right. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **TOYS FOR BOB**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

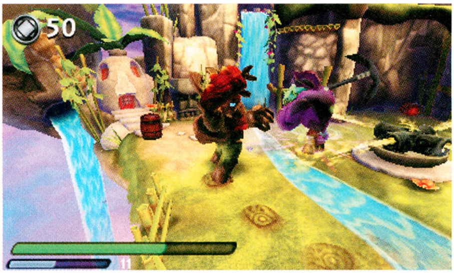
They Might Be Giants

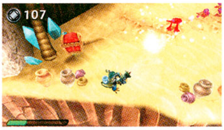
SKYLANDERS GIANTS

7.0

I really dig the idea behind Skylanders. Collecting an army of cool figures and seeing them come to life in a video game speaks to my inner child. Whereas the console version of Skylanders Giants plays like a dungeon-crawler, this portable version is more akin to a traditional platformer. The levels are well designed, and since they're loaded with areas that only certain Skylanders can access, the game has a lot of replay value. Unfortunately, the entire experience is hampered by a horrendously low frame rate, which causes the action to move at a choppy pace. It's especially bad where there's a lot of movement on the screen (such as multiple enemies and animated backgrounds). If you can force your eyes to adjust, you'll have a good time. —**PHIL T.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**





This is **Richard**. He knows it's his job to teach his son **Scotty** what this whole gaming thing is about. The age rating helps him **pick the right games**, but being a good dad means he always wants to know more.

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Rich H.
Lafayette, IN

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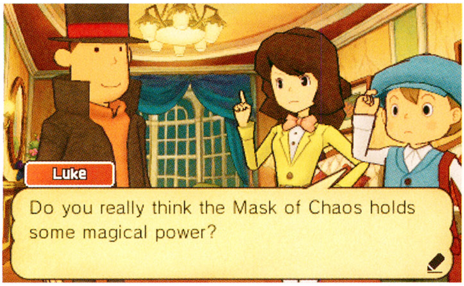
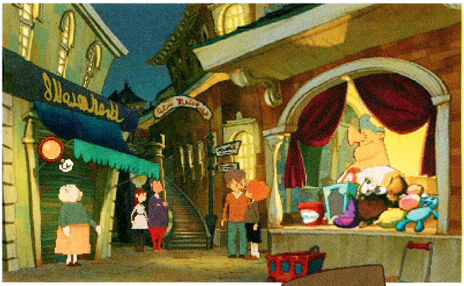
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



Do you really think the Mask of Chaos holds some magical power?



Everyday Miracles

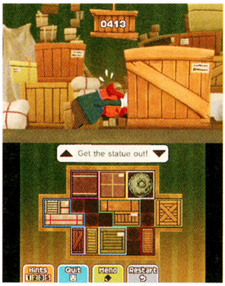
PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE MIRACLE MASK

8.0 Now in its fifth iteration, the Professor Layton series has firmly established itself as being synonymous with high-quality brain-bending portable entertainment. Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask further reinforces that notion by delivering exactly what fans have come to expect from the top-hatted English gentleman—a mystery-filled story, intriguing characters, point-and-click exploration, charming visuals, fine voice acting, and oodles upon oodles of puzzles. As in previous installments, variety is key—you'll encounter logic problems, block-moving puzzles, observational challenges, math problems, mazes, arrangement riddles, peg solitaire, pattern-recognition contests, and more. Admittedly, some puzzles feel a bit familiar, and (as always) there are a few with cheap solutions, but on the whole it's great stuff.

Despite relying on a tried-and-true formula, the game does make an effort to mix things up. The 3D animated cut-scenes are nothing short of gorgeous, and the newly polygonal character models allow for vastly improved animation. Likewise, the 3D environments make exploration feel more interactive than ever before, and although the new interface that goes with them is a tad cumbersome (you have to enter a dedicated exploration mode before you can start investigating your surroundings), it prevents the game from being a wild tap-fest as you scour every nook and cranny for Hint Coins and other secrets. Furthermore, you'll encounter a major gameplay twist in the game's sixth chapter, when it suddenly (and temporarily) transforms into a top-down dungeon-crawler, complete with block-pushing puzzles and strategic enemy encounters. Though this section of the game feels ever so slightly drawn out, it does a good job of keeping things interesting.

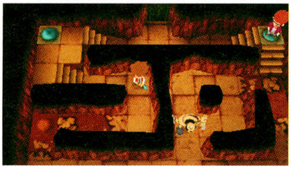
Additionally, Professor Layton and the Miracle Mask tries new things with its narrative. The game alternates between present and past, with some chapters telling of Professor Layton's pursuit of the enigmatic Masked Gentleman in the Las Vegas-esque city of Monte d'Or, and others relating a tragic tale in which the 17-year-old Layton and his best friend, Randall, went searching for long-forgotten treasure. Some of the best storytelling in the Layton series has been its heartfelt, personal moments, and that remains true in this title. It's unfortunate, however, that the game's big mystery is anything but; chances are you'll figure out the secret within minutes of starting the adventure.

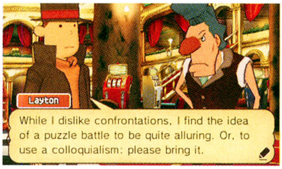
Overall, though, the game hits all the notes that a Professor Layton title should, resulting in another rewarding, cerebrally invigorating quest. —**CHRIS H.**



Oh, yes—those infamous block-moving puzzles are back.

N3DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**





While I dislike confrontations, I find the idea of a puzzle battle to be quite alluring. Or, to use a colloquialism: please bring it.

Even when Professor Layton is talking smack with dimwitted thugs, he insists on being polite.

For **Juri**, the big letter on the box is a good start. But sometimes she wants to know more about the games **Sean** and **Maia** want to play. And now she can, **right from her phone**, right from the store.

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Juri P
Lakeside, CA

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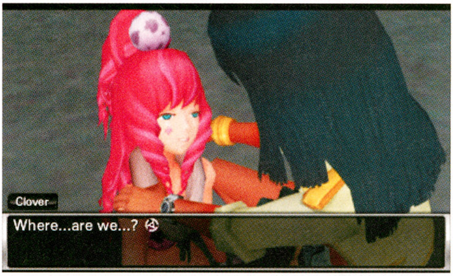
EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Virtuous Reality

ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD



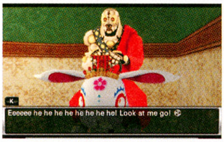
Clover

Where...are we...?

8.5

What's more important: the journey or the destination? If it's the journey that matters, you're in luck, because Virtue's Last Reward delivers a wild one, filled with a compelling cast, baffling mysteries, and clever mind-melting puzzles. If all you care about is the destination, however, you might not like where VLR is headed.

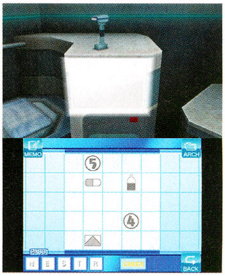
For the first 30 or so hours, this M-rated sequel to the fantastic Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors delivers in all the areas that matter most. Like its predecessor, Virtue's Last Reward tosses nine complex characters into the twisted and deadly Nonary Game. None of the participants seem to know how they got there or what the point of the game is, but it doesn't take long to discover that the only way to escape is to make your way through numerous riddle-filled rooms where you'll solve object-based puzzles, decipher convoluted passwords, play block-sliding minigames, and much more. For the most part, the escape scenarios are very well crafted and each one provides a great sense of satisfaction when you conquer it. Equally rewarding are the excellent (and frequently hilarious) writing, twist-filled story (which is doled out in bits and pieces through lengthy digital-novel cutscenes), and top-notch character progression (which constantly keeps you guessing at everyone's motivations). The English voice acting is also generally very good (the main exception being Zero III), although the inclusion of Japanese voices is appreciated.

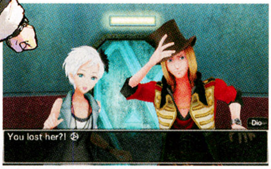


K

Eeeeee he he he he he he he he he! Look at me go!

[Above] Yep, it's a dude in a robot suit riding a mechanical bunny.





Dio

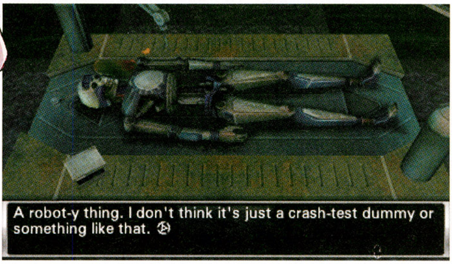
You lost her?!

On the other hand, VLR doesn't carry the same sense of brutal peril as 999, nor is it as visually appealing. Many of the environments are grey and drab, and the CG characters don't look nearly as good as traditional hand-drawn designs. Additionally, more could have been done with the ally-or-betray concept. It's a thought-provoking idea, to be sure, but it usually serves only to progress the plot, and since it's so easy to backtrack and choose a different option, it feels like your decision carries little weight.

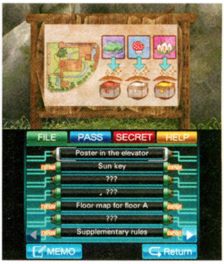
The big issue, though, is the game's ending. Not only do a few plot points require a huge suspension of disbelief, but some major elements aren't resolved. Anyone expecting a definitive conclusion will likely be unsatisfied. Fortunately, the bulk of Virtue's Last Reward is so darn good that ultimately it may not matter.

—**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **SPIKE CHUNSOFT**
ESRB: **MATURE**



A robot-y thing. I don't think it's just a crash-test dummy or something like that.



Poster in the elevator
Sun key
???
???
Floor map for floor A
???
Supplementary rules

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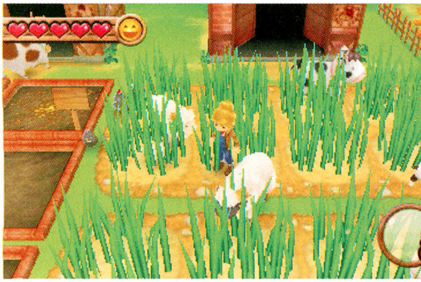
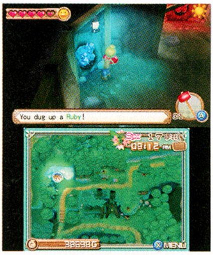
Farm, Farm Away

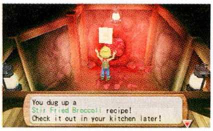
HARVEST MOON 3D: A NEW BEGINNING

7.0

In this latest Harvest Moon installment, your primary goal is to revitalize your father's hometown and, as usual, to be the best darn farmer you can be. Preset objectives such as constructing buildings and decorations to spruce up your village keep you motivated, especially as more activities, places of interest, and opportunities for customization—one of the game's central motifs—become available. Unfortunately, the game is somewhat monotonous for the first 10 hours or so while you settle into your farm to learn the basics. Moreover, although tutorials are comprehensive, they'll occasionally exclude key details, making certain parts of the game confusing—you need ore to upgrade tools, for example, but there's no indication of where the required ore can be found.




You dug up a Ruby!


You dug up a
Stir Fried Broccoli recipe!
Check it out in your kitchen later!

Nevertheless, these are largely nitpicks. Harvest Moon 3D is a nice addition to the long-running franchise, and should please both existing fans and anyone else interested in virtual agriculture. **—CODY M.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS AQL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Attitude Errors

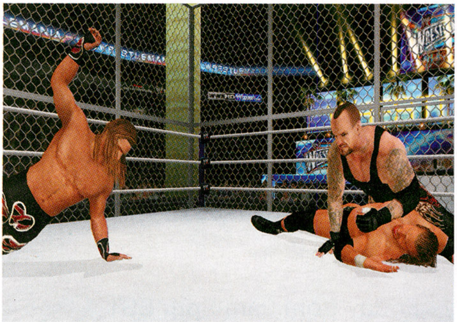
WWE '13

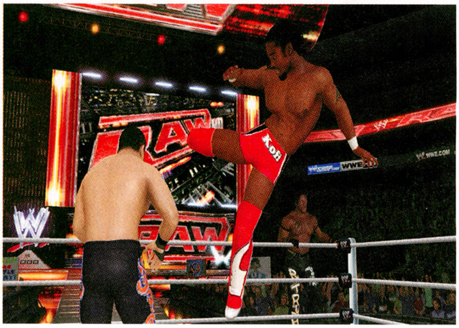
6.5

From a big-picture perspective, WWE '13 impresses. The in-ring action is as solid as ever, the controls do their job, and the game is bursting with content. There are more match types, moves, characters, and customization options than ever before, and a lot of the new/upgraded match types—such as the special referee match and the I Quit match—are a lot of fun. The excellent Attitude Era campaign is also a huge improvement over last year's Road to WrestleMania mode; despite the fact that you're reenacting historical matches, you're given a lot of freedom. (It is weird that there's no story mode for current WWE performers, however.)

When it comes to the details, though, WWE '13 is shockingly unpolished. Matches sometimes suffer from inexplicable sluggishness, collision on certain moves is utterly broken, and the audio is a mess—entrance music keeps dropping out, for example. Despite promises of enhancements, the Universe (career) mode is full of glitches and it's a struggle to make events play out as you'd like. WWE '13 comes across as too ambitious for its own good. **—CHRIS H.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **YUKE'S**
ESRB: **TEEN**





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KEITH LEMON Is Wolverine. Sort of
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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Angry Birds Trilogy	6.0	Activision	283	E
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Code of Princess	7.5	Atlus	283	T
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
Heroes of Ruin	7.0	Square Enix	280	T
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
Kid Icarus: Uprising	9.5	Nintendo	277	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	8.0	Square Enix	281	E10+
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	7.0	Warner Bros.	280	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Mario Tennis Open	7.0	Nintendo	278	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. 2	8.5	Nintendo	282	E
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rayman Origins	8.5	Ubisoft	279	E10+
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	8.0	Sega	280	E10+
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	5.5	Atari	278	E
Shifting World	6.5	Aksys	277	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	7.0	Nintendo	277	T
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	8.0	Square Enix	280	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

KIRBY'S DREAM COLLECTION: SPECIAL EDITION

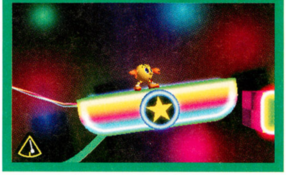
1,950
START
GOAL
0:23.58

I've always been a fan of the Kirby series, and it's great to have so many of the little puffball's classic adventures together in one package. Sure, I would have liked to have seen some of Kirby's spin-off titles included, and I really would have appreciated the Super NES version of Kirby's Star Stacker (which was released only in Japan), but the on-disc bonus material, soundtrack CD, and collectible book help to lessen that minor disappointment. If only all anniversary collections were this nice. **—PHIL T.**

MORE ON:

PAC-MAN & GALAGA DIMENSIONS

Although I thoroughly enjoyed playing Pac-Man Championship Edition and Galaga Legions, as well as their original retro counterparts, I wasn't particularly impressed by the two Nintendo 3DS-exclusive titles in this small anthology. Pac-Man Tilt's gyroscope controls are somewhat awkward, and Galaga 3D Impact just seems like a run-of-the-mill on-rails shooter. **—CODY M.**



Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	T
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Brave: The Video Game	5.0	Disney	280	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Kirby's Dream Collection: Special Edition	8.5	Nintendo	282	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
The Last Story	9.0	Xseed	281	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Madden NFL 13	6.5	Electronic Arts	283	E
Major League Baseball 2K12	2.5	2K Sports	277	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T
Xenoblade Chronicles	9.0	Nintendo	277	T

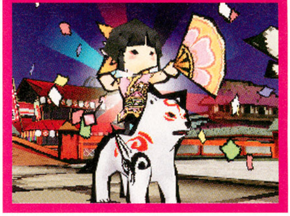
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
The Amazing Spider-Man	5.0	Activision	281	E10+
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black Version 2	8.0	Nintendo	283	E
Pokémon Conquest	9.0	Nintendo	279	E
Pokémon White Version 2	8.0	Nintendo	283	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

MORE ON:

OKAMIDEN

A Legend of Zelda-style action-adventure starring an adorable wolf-pup protagonist, Okamiden oozes charm, quality, and style. The touch-screen paintbrush play mechanics work brilliantly, and the controllable partners bring a unique take on puzzles. Combat is solid, as well. It's just too bad the game wasn't developed for N3DS.... **—CHRIS H.**

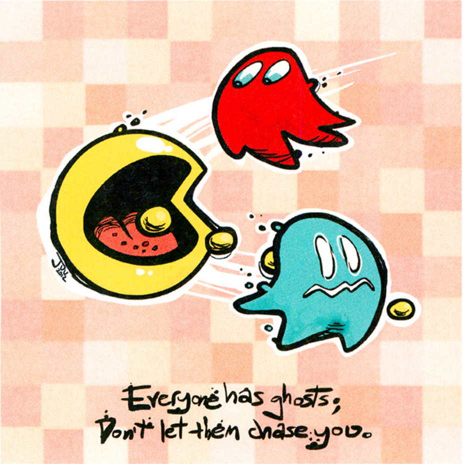


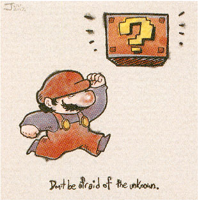
MORE ON:

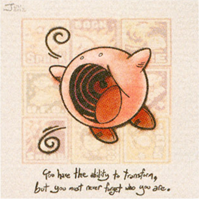
XENOBLADE CHRONICLES

Quest
Target

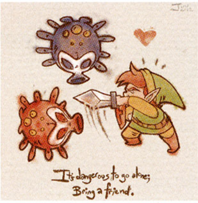
If you're looking for an RPG that you can thoroughly immerse yourself in, Xenoblade Chronicles is just the ticket. The game is simply enormous—there's so much geography to explore, so many side quests to complete, and so many NPCs to interact with that you could be absorbed for days on end. I've already played for more than 100 hours and the ending is barely in sight. An intriguing story and convincing characters also help make this a must-play. **—CHRIS H.**

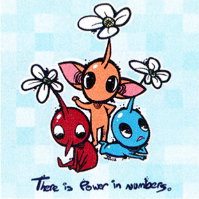

Everyone has ghosts;
Don't let them chase you.


Don't be afraid of the unknown.


You have the ability to transform,
but you must never forget who you are.

Who would have thought our favorite game characters would make such great motivational speakers?


It's dangerous to go alone;
Bring a friend.


There is Power in numbers.

FANDOM

It's Ninspirational!

Game characters dish out life lessons

VIDEO GAMES RESONATE with players in a multitude of ways and on many different levels, as anyone who's spent time poring over the Community section's many fascinating fan-made projects can attest. For Kathryn DeFeo of Seattle, Washington, games provided a much-needed confidence boost. When times were tough, the 24-year-old freelance illustrator found a fun way to draw deeper meaning from her favorite characters, turning their virtual experiences into sources of real-world inspiration with her charming "What Video Games Have Taught Me" art-print series.

After moving across the country in search of a job in the gaming industry, DeFeo grew discouraged and began searching for a means to motivate herself and restore lost confidence. Posting screenshots of favorite game characters on her blog led DeFeo to consider what each scene meant to her symbolically. She came up with snappy captions for them, and eventually decided to hand-draw them and turn each scene into one-panel comics just for fun.

"The first piece in the series (featuring Mario and the ? Block) started out as a sketch which I eventually worked into a finished illustration," DeFeo recalls. "I had received a lot of positive feedback after posting it to my blog in January 2012, so I continued making them.

"Inspiration is easy to find, and not just while playing video games. It's the associations that I make between life experiences and the symbolism found in games that helps these pieces come to life."

Readers loved the motivational prints, and even fellow illustrator Chris Gerringer of Paperbeatsscissors took notice, creating his own spinoff series titled "Stuff I Learned from Video Games." DeFeo and Gerringer eventually formed a collaborative project online that combined their efforts into "What Video Games Have Taught Us."

"I hope it will make people look at games from a different perspective," DeFeo says about the project. "Video games are a wonderful vehicle for storytelling, and being able to actually interact with a fictional world and its characters can really make a positive impact on an individual."

Initially, DeFeo made 10 pieces for the series, but she plans to keep plugging away and create a new one each week for the foreseeable future. She hopes to eventually put everything together into a book or organize an art-gallery showing with all of the pieces combined. **—NATHAN M.**

PHOTO CHALLENGE

VOLUME 282'S THEME: BACK TO SCHOOL

PHOTO FROM JACOB M.

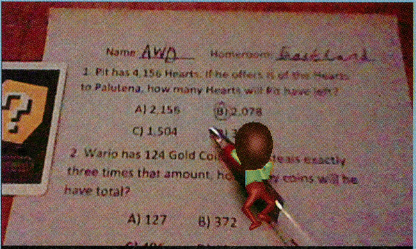

Name AWD Homeroom
1. Pit has 4,156 Hearts. If he offers
to Palutena, how many Hearts will Pit have left?
A) 2,156 B) 2,078
C) 1,504
2. Wario has 124 Gold Coi
three times that amount, ho
have total?
A) 127 B) 372

PHOTO FROM AWD

PHOTO FROM KIMMY K. AND ELLIE K.

PHOTO FROM NATE S.

VOLUME 283'S THEME: NINTENDO POWER

PHOTO FROM BENJAMIN D.

PHOTO FROM FORREST L.

Farewell, Old Friend...

PHOTO FROM PROFESSOR ALKYDS

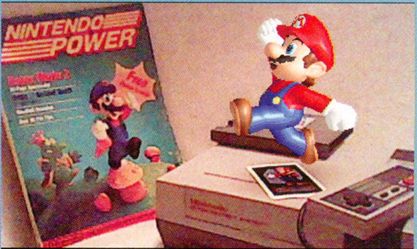
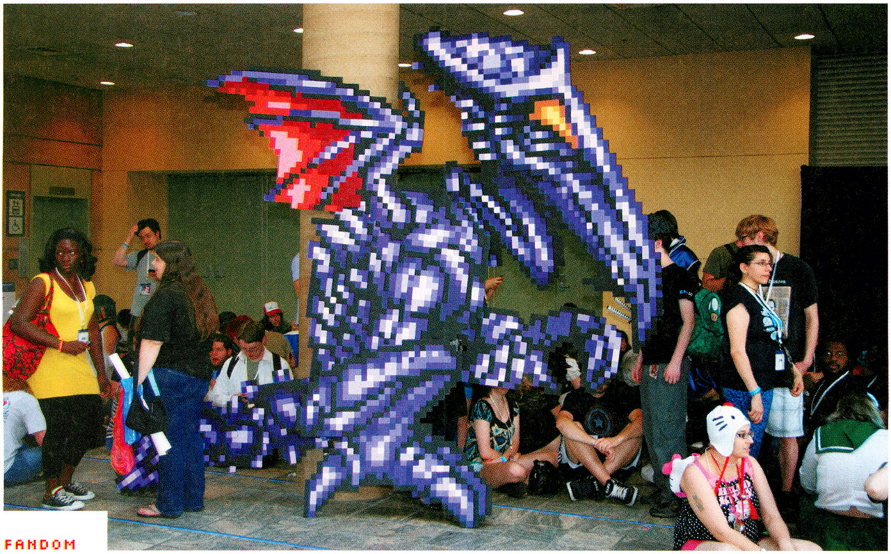

NINTENDO POWER

PHOTO FROM SHAWN G.



FANDOM

Ridley Roams Free!

This 11-foot-tall costume turns heads for more than just its scale.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT that an issue of Nintendo Power would be used to secure a research grant to create elaborate, Metroid-inspired costumes? Hats off to the ingenuity of reader Daniel Cattell, who we featured in Vol. 272 thanks to his spectacular 16-bit-stylized costumes of Samus Aran and a Torizo Statue from Super Nintendo classic Super Metroid. The 24-year-old recent graduate of Rutgers University's animation program used that issue to demonstrate his previous work, and successfully earned a $500 grant to further explore the mashup of pixel art and costume design he's affectionately dubbed "CosPIX."

Cattell may not be Samus, and this sure isn't the planet Zebes, but that towering cosplay still looks amazing.

Cattell explains, "Samus was a hard act to follow! I wanted to do something crazy and really push the limits, and it had to be something popular, so I figured that I'd do Ridley to scale with her. They match up as perfectly as they do in Super Metroid, so our Ridley is 11 feet tall with his mouth open."

Like the earlier creations, Ridley is a wearable and well-articulated costume—it just happens to stand about twice as tall as an average American adult. Cattell used the grant to purchase construction materials such as Coroplast (corrugated plastic sheets), to which he adhered canvas to nail the pixel-centric look. With the help of friends and other artists, the costume took about six months to complete, and the final result served as his senior thesis project.

A friend recently donned the costume for the Otakon convention in Baltimore, Maryland, while Cattell and his girlfriend Krystal Belcher followed the towering beast for technical support. "We had a very scary incident where he boarded an escalator that had a low ceiling at the bottom—which we noticed partway down," he admits. "We angled [the costume] just right as we came to the drop, and the people above us all applauded." Escalator close calls aside, convention-goers "were baffled and awestruck, and didn't believe what they were seeing. It was a struggle to move it, which was ever-exacerbated by constant photo requests."

With school completed, Cattell is considering new cosplay projects, such as Doc Louis and Little Mac from the memorable training sequence in Punch-Out!!—but a technical hurdle remains. "[It] would be a lot of fun for everyone if I can figure out how to do the bicycle," Cattell acknowledges. Considering the fact that he brought a hulking, 11-foot-tall pixel creature to life, we imagine he'll figure out this one, too. **—ANDREW H.**

FANDOM

Mining Memories

NES nostalgia spawns these glorious paintings.

FOND CHILDHOOD MEMORIES carved out with an NES controller in hand deliver a steady drip of inspiration to fuel Blake Wheeler's thought-provoking art, which frequently blends pop-culture references with Nintendo-themed imagery. Wheeler, 30, of Charleston, West Virginia, has been drawing for most of his life, and he's developed a real knack for taking rough ideas scratched into the pages of a notebook and turning them into elaborate works of art. But the real magic happens when this Nintendo fan grabs a brush and puts paint to canvas to bring his sketches to life.

Wheeler discovered his love for drawing way back in kindergarten, when classmates would ask him to draw their favorite cartoon characters. He's been creating art ever since, even going on to study fine art in college. But while drawing was his first love, painting is his real passion. Gaming also ranks high on his to-do list, as is readily apparent by the quirky Nintendo-themed references woven throughout much of his work.

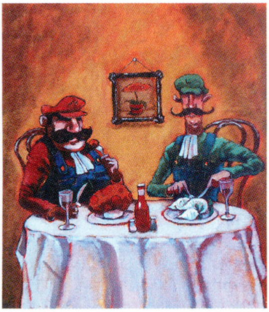
"Nintendo games and characters are a huge inspiration to my art, especially my more recent paintings," he explains. "Although I have respect [for] and have studied the fine-art world, I am much more inspired by the work of Shigeru Miyamoto than, let's say, Pablo Picasso. The worlds and characters that he has created pretty much defined my childhood and gave me experiences I still remember to this day."

Each piece starts out as a rough sketch that he develops, tweaks, and mulls over before committing it to the canvas. This early planning stage is where Wheeler typically clocks the most time. From there, painting the piece is a layered process that can take anywhere from 4 to 10 hours to complete, depending on the size of the canvas and scope of the work.

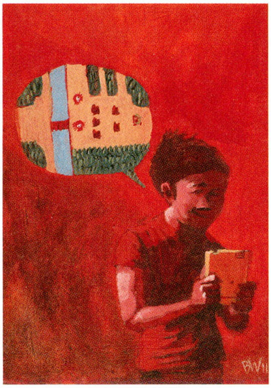
Subject-wise, Wheeler draws on familiar game characters, like Mega Man, the Super Mario Bros., and Link, but his pieces also put a unique spin on their subject, often touching on personal experiences and memories from many years of gaming. A piece titled "Gold Cartridge," for example, came about when he recalled a particular experience buying and opening a copy of The Legend of Zelda for NES.

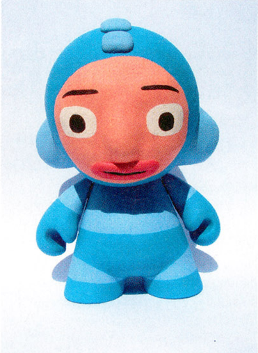
"I had looked at the box in the store before I received it, but had no idea the actual cartridge was gold," he says. "I remember just looking at it thinking how cool it looked; it was such an awesome surprise.... One of the things I really enjoy about painting is how I can communicate my love of things like Nintendo games to other people where they can recall their own personal experiences," he adds.

You can check out Wheeler's fascinating creations at bewheel.deviantart.com.
—**NATHAN M.**



We love the way Blake puts his own spin on each of his creative paintings, drawing from his own personal memories.





FANDOM

Show Me the (Mega Man) Munny

A UK artist transforms the Blue Bomber.

MEGA MAN CHANGES his wardrobe and look every time he acquires a new power, so it really speaks to Jack Teagle's abilities as an artist that he was able to make the character look truly unique with this Munny doll crafted in the Blue Bomber's honor.

"I had this Munny lying around for a long time and wanted to make a custom [creation] that would suit its shape," explains Teagle. "I'm a huge Mega Man fan and I thought the proportions of a Munny are quite close to how the NES sprites looked: squat and small."

Teagle, based in Newquay, Cornwall, UK, calls this unusual art style "naïve," but only someone with a good bit of experience could've made this. Using Milliput—a brand of epoxy putty—to sculpt the Munny's face and tweak its ears, Teagle proceeded to blast it all with a coat of spray paint and then added the little details in acrylic.

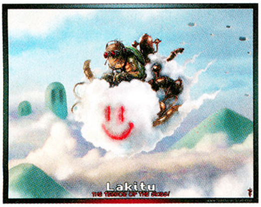
Teagle is no stranger to crafting Mega Man-inspired pieces. For an iam8bit art exhibition in Los Angeles, he did a painting of Mega Man defeating the log-wearing, leaf-blasting Wood Man, Teagle's favorite villain from the series. —**DAVID W.**

FANDOM

Lakitu Gets Steamed

The pesky Spiny-slinger, wildly reimagined

SAL VADOR, from Minnesota by way of Chicago, Illinois, has been drawing for 15 years, but undoubtedly one of his latest sketches is his greatest. In a piece titled "Lakitu: The Terror of the Skies," Mario's floating nemesis is brought into the steampunk era, shown careening around the stratosphere in a cloud with gauges and exhaust pipes.


Lakitu
THE TERROR OF THE SKIES!

"I've always thought of Lakitu's cloud as a 'flying machine' of sorts," explains Vador. "In many games he's often shown wielding machines or gadgets." He's right: Lakitu totes around a camera in Super Mario 64 and Paper Mario, and he operates the traffic lights in Mario Kart. But what's Vador's explanation for why the cloud seems to be smiling? "I figured he'd have to have a furnace on his machine...so there's these little slots or vents in the furnace area in the shape of that trademark smile," said Vador. "The red glow from the embers and flames creates the effect."

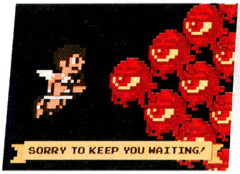
Vador drew the illustration in 40 minutes, and then spent about eight hours digitally painting it. Imagine how much faster he could've done it if he'd had Lakitu's mechanical prowess! —**DAVID W.**

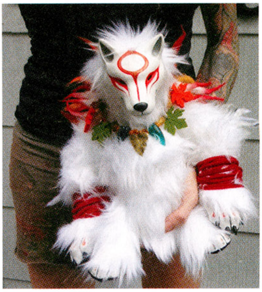
FANDOM

Kid's a Card

A belated birthday wish delivered by a great homemade creation

STORE-BOUGHT GREETING CARDS are certainly convenient, but homemade ones are much more personal. Reader Greg Goldschmidt, Jr. designed this custom Kid Icarus card as a belated birthday greeting for his younger brother, who had recently become a fan of the series via Kid Icarus: Uprising and 3D Classics: Kid Icarus on Nintendo 3DS. The card features pixel-based artwork that's been augmented with various textures, and the end result feels modern and classic at the same time. On the outside, the card features the first line from Uprising: "Sorry to keep you waiting"—a reference to the belated nature of the card, as well as to the long gap between Kid Icarus's classic titles and Uprising's release—along with a pixel illustration of Pit facing a group of Monoeye foes. The inside, meanwhile, shows Pit hoisting a pair of Sacred Treasures as Lady Palutena stands next to a third; between them sits a cake. Goldschmidt, Jr. estimates he spent more than 15 hours arranging the myriad pixels and textures to create the card. The 27-year-old graphic artist from Cincinnati, Ohio, plans to next utilize his talents to create custom video game-themed versions of classic card games, such as Super Mario: Go Fish and Metroid: Old Maid. —**ANDREW H.**


SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING!



FANDOM

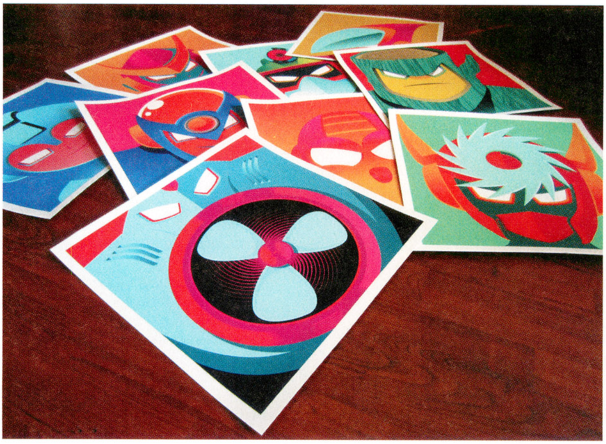
Ammy's Alive!

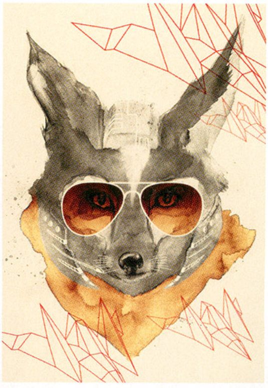
Okami's adorable Amaterasu becomes an amazing art doll.

MELITA CURPHY is a devoted fan of Okami, which is only natural considering the game's immense charms and undeniable beauty. Citing Capcom's beloved adventure as a "a huge stress reliever," the Chicago native even has a large Okami-themed tattoo on her arm, and says the game reminds her of a trip she took to Japan the year of its release. "I have really fond memories of seeing the cherry trees with no leaves [in the winter]," she adds, "and wanting to Celestial Brush them to bloom!"

Curphy is not just a fan, but also an accomplished artist, as exemplified by this image of her art doll inspired by Amaterasu, the game's iconic wolf. The 34-year-old has a degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, but her impressive sculpting and doll-making skills are self-taught. She typically creates original works, but was so taken with Amaterasu when playing Okami again recently that she decided to re-create her in clay and plush.

The head and paws were sculpted out of resin, which is cast in a mold and results in a product that is lightweight but sturdy. They were then hand-painted before being sealed in a clear coat. Curphy created a pattern for the fur, and once satisfied with the design, she sewed it all together and stuffed it to form. From there, what remained were the last little details, and while the fiery green disk on the wolf's back is pulled from the game, the leafy necklace and front-paw wraps are original touches that fit in well with the overall design. Although she's uncertain how many hours she spent bringing Amaterasu to life, Curphy says the doll, unsurprisingly, required a "very, very long process with many steps." —**ANDREW H.**





[Above] Star Fox plus Top Gun plus vector art equals this amazing piece!

FANDOM

Gorgeous Graphics

These Nintendo-themed illustrations raise the bar.

WHEN HE WAS FRESH out of college, Adam Sidwell found it daunting to build a successful graphic-design career as an illustrator. But when you look at the immaculate attention to detail poured into his work, its no surprise he eventually found his way. A love of Nintendo games and pop culture helped guide him there.

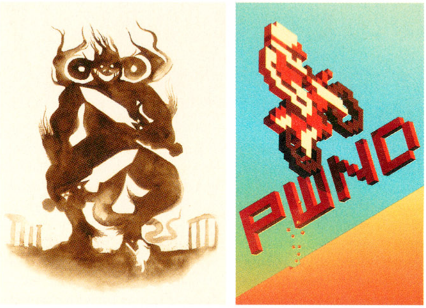
"I started going along the path of graphic design in college when it became abundantly clear that unless you were ungodly talented (or wanted to go into teaching) there is little to no money in illustration," says Sidwell, 29, who recently moved to Seattle, Washington. "I worked in the advertising field for a while, and in 2010 I began a blog called 52 Bad Dudes where I was illustrating a pop-culture 'bad guy' every week." That project proved so successful that he was able to quit his day job to focus on illustration full-time.

Subjectwise, Sidwell focuses on "video games, awesome movies, and TV shows." He's a lifelong Nintendo fan, so his pieces often feature interesting renditions of popular game characters. Whether it's a heavily stylized twist on Excitebike, sleek portraits of the Star Fox team, or colorful re-creations of Mega Man 2 baddies, he uses a skillful design touch to make each illustration pop.

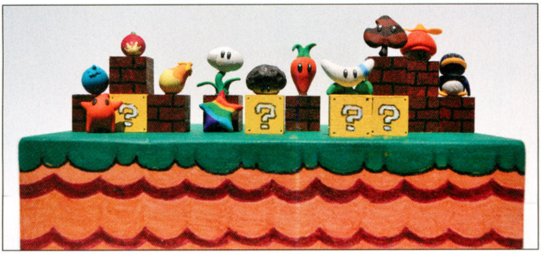
Most pieces start out as sketches that are scanned or traced into Photoshop, though he also works with India ink and paints to provide color-wash effects. It can take anywhere from 10 to 12 hours to finish an illustration, depending on how much digital dabbling is involved. While much of his design work is digitally focused, Sidwell sometimes colors outside the lines by experimenting with unusual techniques to produce dramatic effects.

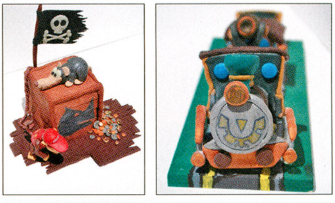
For his "Like a Boss" series, featuring stunning portrayals of epic boss encounters from Nintendo classics, he tried something completely different. "I found it fascinating to 'paint' the entire image with just water, then just touch the water with the paint and watch the image fill in," he recalls. "Nobody else got to experience it other than me, but it was awesome."

Ultimately, Sidwell's inspiration boils down to a simple idea: he sticks to what he knows and loves. "If someone were to lock me in a room with nothing but a pencil and a piece of paper, without any instruction, they'd probably return to find a drawing of Bowser," he says. "The circumstances don't matter. I just like to draw these things." **—NATHAN M.**



In the battle between India ink and digital wizardry, everyone wins. These wildly different artistic techniques produce stunning results.





Whether incorporating an existing toy or not, Caswell's creations capture the spirit of their inspirations.

FANDOM

Original Collectibles

This reader pays tribute to Nintendo favorites with clay and ingenuity.

CRAFTY READER JOSEPH CASWELL III sent in these Nintendo-inspired figures, which stem from a longtime love of the company's games and a desire to re-create some of his favorite elements from them.

"Nintendo has a clear design philosophy that one can see in all their games that simply makes them the best game-makers in the world," says the 29-year-old computer-science student from Stockton, California, who hopes to enter the world of game and level design once he finishes his degree. For now, though, he's merging his fondness for Nintendo games with his love for art, using clay and other materials to craft the kinds of collectibles he wishes were sold in stores.

In some cases the works are made entirely from scratch—such as the display of masks from The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask; each is crafted of colorful clay, and the frame even includes L and R Button indicators to perfectly mimic the pause menu of the Nintendo 64 classic. Another piece highlights the myriad power-ups from the various Super Mario games—Caswell says it's a work in progress—while a Kirby display utilizes clay set atop a wooden box, with various colors and textures combined to make what looks like a moment from a beloved whimsical adventure.

At times, though, Caswell opts to use an existing official action figure to create a familiar scene around it, essentially developing a scenario inspired by a single character. One based on Wario is particularly impressive; the plastic figurine is surrounded by treasure and dozens of tiny clay coins. Others based on Diddy and Dixie Kong similarly capture the spirit of the source material, and draw a lot more attention on a shelf than the standalone plastic heroes might.

Caswell keeps the projects light and inexpensive, which lets him tackle such a wide array of them amidst his studies, though he has big plans for future output. He's planning a wall decoration based on Super Metroid, with a painted backdrop and clay-based ground and foes, but he tells us, "The project that I am most excited about is a Super Mario Galaxy mobile, which will be made up of five to seven globes that look like select planetoids from the games." That's a collectible we'd be happy to hang above our beds. **—ANDREW H.**

FANDOM

Modern History

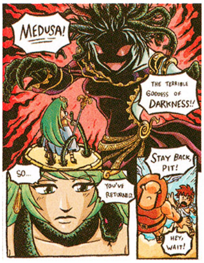
One reader creates his own comics inspired by those from Nintendo Power's past.

IN YEARS PAST Nintendo Power's pages were often filled with fantastic comic tales of some of our favorite game heroes. Longtime reader Adam Elbahtimy grew up absorbing those colorful adventures, and now aims to keep their spirit alive through his own fan comics, which he posts freely at dokidokiarcade.blogspot.com.

"Reading Benimaru Itoh's Star Fox and Shotaro Ishinomori's A Link to the Past comics in Nintendo Power was really inspirational to me," explains the 25-year-old freelance artist, "because they were probably the first time I saw that comics could break away from the typical superhero stuff." Reading those comics also pushed him to explore the work of legendary manga artists like Akira Toriyama and Osamu Tezuka, which he credits for having provided him with a "pretty solid foundation for both art and storytelling."

The Philadelphia-area native has explored a wide array of video game stories in his fan comics, with pieces based on the likes of The Legend of Zelda, Kid Icarus: Uprising, and even recent Nintendo 3DS eShop release Dillon's Rolling Western. Elbahtimy typically starts with a swift pencil sketch before inking the artwork with a permanent marker, and then completes each piece digitally, adding text, bold colors, and any special effects to create the finished product.

He produces pixel art in addition to hand-drawn creations, and says he has a few different projects in the works. Although his comics are done purely for fun, he hopes to one day create such work as a career. "Doing comics has been my passion for such a long time, literally the driving force behind my life, and being able to do what I love for a living would really be a dream come true," he shares. With talent like this, it's only a matter of time! **—ANDREW H.**


MEDUSA!
THE TERRIBLE GODDESS OF DARKNESS!!
STAY BACK, PIT!
SO...
YOU'VE RETURNED
HEY, WAIT!

Balrog Caught on Film

A group of dedicated fan filmmakers craft a mockumentary hit.

WITH A VIDEO CAMERA, some DIY props, and a willing group of pals, anyone can make a fun fan-made film based on a favorite game character, but making it look pro-quality is a whole different story. Street Fighter enthusiast Greg Gertmenian took his love of games to the next level when he rallied a posse to form his own film production studio for just such a project. The resulting faux documentary, Balrog: Behind the Glory, is so polished and well-crafted that it had us fooled for a moment.

Gertmenian owns and produces for the California-based Chubby Boy Productions, which he formed with several friends in 2011 for the sole purpose of creating a short mockumentary about the villainous Balrog from Street Fighter II. The film delves into the character's past, exploring his trajectory from an innocent youth to an infamous adulthood. The team spent every penny of its savings to put the film together, but their effort, skill, and dedication show in the final product.

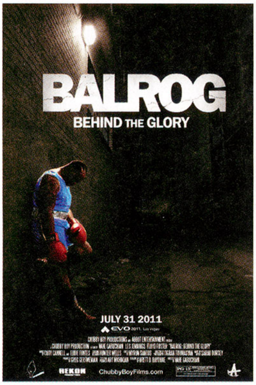
Chubby Boy Productions team members hard at work behind the camera. It took four months to shoot all the scenes.

"Many feature films will shoot a 95-minute project over the course of three to five weeks. Our film was 10.5 minutes long and took us about four months to shoot, simply because we didn't have a lot of money to make it happen," he explains. "What caused the biggest delays was waiting for locations to become available to us. Since our locations were quite specific, the days we shot depended on when those locations could squeeze us into their schedules between higher-paying customers."

Most folks on the team had never made a film of this scale before, he says, and there was a lot of nervousness and anticipation over the project's success. Though it was an involved undertaking that included juggling a small cast and crew, limited resources, and a bustling schedule, filming went surprisingly well:

"At the end of each day, we braced ourselves for the next day's shoot to be a disaster—because statistically speaking, our track record was becoming less and less sustainable," he says. "I think everyone that signed on was so outstandingly committed to the concept and our team that, when there were gaps to be filled, people were more than happy to step in and fill them."

Balrog: Behind the Glory was first screened at Evo 2011, the massive annual fighting-game championship, to glowing reviews. Gertmenian and his team hope to follow up with another Street Fight II short. "We just love these characters and want to continue giving them human voices in gritty and visually appealing worlds," he says. "If the next one goes well, we have a whole packet of ideas for expanding other characters in Street Fighter and the Capcom universe." **—NATHAN M.**



[Above] One cool promo poster. [Right] Balrog delivers a serious smackdown.

NEXT MONTH

DECEMBER 2012 VOL. 285

Nintendo Power bids farewell. In our final issue, we'll celebrate the magazine's incredible legacy with a special look back at more than 24 years of Nintendo goodness, then take a glimpse into gaming's future with reviews of the biggest Wii U launch titles. See you then!

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